

Return To Standard

by H3PD

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Summary: Three years after the end of the Human-Covenant War, an ONI Prowler mission to regain contact with survivors of lost or partial glassed colonies is destroyed over what remains of the colony of Standard. A joint operation between the Sangheili and the UNSC head to find out what happened, however there is much that lies bellow the planet's surface. Sequel to The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee

1. Act I Pt 1 All Alone

**_The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act I Part 1

_**

All Alone

_As it begins over 100,000 years ago, just a few months before the activation of the Halo array, a Forerunner Scientist put the finishing touches on a Device. A Device that could change the user's very species. _

She sat hunched over a table as she carefully carved her symbol into the back casing. A faint explosion rocked the room and small particles of dust fell from the ceiling. The Scientist lifted the Device from its cradle and it was released with a soft hiss. "_System charged_" flashed on its screen. She slowly walked over to a vault and set it inside. The lights flashed red and the vault closed sealing the device away. Another explosion shook the facility she was in, small tools and other items fell off the table. The Scientist quickly walked out of her lab and bumped into her 17 year old daughter Marissa, she was badly bruised on her face like she had fallen down a ramp.

"Mother- the Flood is_ here_! We're beginning orbital bombardment! And there's only a few more evacuation shuttles- We need to leave. NOW!" Marissa screamed at her mother.

"Don't worry- We'll make it." She replied calmly and sealed the door

to her lab.

The Scientist pushed Marissa back up the hallway and an explosion shook the facility, this time much closer. A holographic control panel fussed out of existence and they lost their lighting. Marissa was pushed out in to the light and the chaos of the evacuation zone. Other scientists and civilians rushed into waiting ships after they were screened for Flood contamination. Marissa and her mother were promptly screened and pushed into a group heading for the nearest shuttle. She looked back and watched warships fire their main guns at the planet surface, the ground shook moments later. Finally Marissa was sent through the airlock of the shuttle. When she looked behind her... her mother was gone.

The shuttle lifted off and sped full speed off the planet. Marissa searched the shuttle for her mother but could not find her anywhere. She was deposited on board a larger transport ship and run through another bio-scan. She asked one of the ships stewards about checking the ships manifest for her mother but was informed that she was not on board. Marissa sat in the corner of one of the ship's cargo holds and cried for her mother. She was sure her mother was lost on that planet, and there was nothing else that she could do to help.

A few weeks after living at a refugee camp on a planet in another system Marissa was approached by a group of scientists that claimed to be colleagues of her late mother. They told her that her mother was part of a fall back plan. Marissa didn't know the exact details, but she did know but from what she could understand it was wired to her Mother's DNA and that she was the closest match. Marissa contemplated what to do then finally she decided to go with them. The next thing she knew they took her to a planet, and she didn't even know if it had a name.

Marissa sat in a shuttle as it entered the planet's atmosphere. The outside of the hull heated red and the windows darkened. She gripped the sides of her seat as the shuttle began to shake, her restraints tightened to keep her steady, then all of a sudden the shaking stopped. When the windows depolarized Marissa glimpsed a beautiful landscape. However the view did not last long, for the shuttle plunged into an ocean.

Marissa jumped at the sudden flash of water rushing over the window. She looked around at the other passengers and felt relieved that they seemed nervous too. The shuttle drifted down to the sea floor and started to glide over the reefs until they came to a submerged cliff face. Marissa could see the edges of what looked like a hangar as the shuttle entered through a shield. The ship settled in the hangar and the passengers were instructed to disembark.

Marissa stood up and walked down the ramp. She was met with a group of scientist in hazard suits as soon as she stepped off. They quickly ran a scanner over her head and she could just make out some of what they were saying.

"Her brain waves are syncing up fine, same with her DNA," One of them said.

"Good, I was worried that wouldn't happen, anyhow she's still too young we'll have to-" He turned away before Marissa could hear the rest. She was left standing in the hangar wondering what they were

going to do to her if she was too young for whatever they had in mind.

The Scientist stopped and glanced back at her, "Marissa- follow me."

Marissa followed the Scientist down a corridor and came to a T-junction with a window. She had thought that the facility was closed and buried underground but now she was looking at a massive open interior. It looked like it was a shield world, only smaller for she could see the faint outline in the distance. The window she was looking out of was nearly at the top of the facility, and if seen from below it wouldn't even be a speck. There were some clouds further off near a bright spot and it looked like it was raining below. The Scientist tapped her shoulder and motioned for her to continue on.

They walked to a teleporter station at the end of the hallway. There she was taken to ground level in an instant. She looked around the platform she found herself on and saw she was protruding over a snow covered gorge filled with structures. The rooftop on a far building caught her eye; her Mother's symbol was carved into a large access port. She suddenly had a strange feeling to jump, and join her mother, but a stronger feeling told her to stay, that things would get better soon. Marissa took a step away from the edge and followed the Scientist into the facility.

The interior was a maze of corridors leading to labs and the few rooms that connected to the main hall just held a few cots nothing much else.

"Your quarters are up the lift," the Scientist said nodding to a lift embedded in the wall. "We'll begin tomorrow. Until then you are free to wander."

Marissa nodded and took the lift up to her quarters. She found that the room only held the basic furniture, a bed and a desk with a console. She looked out on the balcony and saw a breath taking view of the gorge and the mountains to the ocean on the other side. The air was refreshing and cool. Marissa sat back and enjoyed the view in a chair until sleep descended upon her. In the morning she woke to darkness. She was confused; it was not possible for facilities with a micro-star to have a day-night cycle. She stood up on the balcony and looked to where the sun was, there was now a bright full moon. Marissa went down the lift and jogged through the corridor looking for a Technician. Eventually she found one in the lower machinery levels.

"Excuse me sir, but I am wondering how you simulated a day-night cycle with a micro-star. Let alone make it a moon." Marissa asked him when he saw her.

"Well, this facility does not have a micro-star. It is a large holographic projection that simulates the light and radiated heat of a star at a normal distance from habitable planet. That's why it can change to a moon." The Technician told her.

"Ah, thank you for letting me know, I was confused."

"No problem, glad I could help," he said.

Marissa strolled back up to her room and went back into her bed. However, before she could fall asleep again the Computer console beeped. She looked up and saw a Monitor sphere floating blankly at her. She got up and sat at the console. A message on screen said the project lead would be up in an hour to begin and that he would like her to customize the Monitor sphere. She opened the application she was shown and saw a Monitor just like the one that was floating next to her. It had a variety of colors and options which she chose blue for the base and red for the secondary finally gold for the details. She wrote her name along the edge and a call sign just for fun '_M-004'. After a few more tweaks she was satisfied with the design and she pressed apply. The Monitor sphere immediately changed to match the one next to her. It looked good and she pulled it out onto the balcony to see it in the light.

Marissa paced back and forth in her room, the Scientists were on their way to explain what her mother was part of on this planet. She still had no idea what she was for. She stopped and looked over at the work station, the Monitor sphere floated with quiet hum staring blankly in to the distance. Quickly she walked over to the console screen. Marissa opened a folder and glanced at the documents. It was full of her mother's research. The topics ranged from accelerated aging to traveling between dimensions. Behind her, the door opened. A few Scientists walked in and stood by the door.

"Marissa, it's time to begin." The project lead said. They took her down to a lab room very similar to the one she had last seen her mother in. "Your mother was involved in a project to transfer the mind into the AI matrix in case of the Halo array activation. Afterwards the mind would be transferred back into a cloned body..." He took a breath and looked at his colleagues. "We are asking if you would take her place."

Marissa understood why they were asking, everyone knew the Flood were starting to escape containment. What had happened to her and her mother were direct examples of that. Also any programs to try to preserve all the different species from the destruction the Halos would unleash were too important to be scrapped. She nodded and said yes.

"Excellent, the only problem is that in order for the experiment to work, you need to be at least twenty years old... Your mother designed a device-

"That can accelerate ageing." She finished for him."

"Yes, we would like to use one of them on you."

"Alright, it's for the greater good. Go ahead." Marissa said.

The Scientists moved her to a bed and placed a small object on her wrist. It clamped down and she winced as something poked through her flesh. The Scientists moved over to a console. Moments later she felt a tingling sensation traveling up her arm followed by the area becoming numb. She could feel her skin begin to stretch and her hips widen to child bearing capacity. She clenched her jaw as small shots of pain jumped over her body. Bones broke under stress and realigned, but the pain quickly faded into the numbness. Then finally the numbness itself retreated back into the object they had placed on her

wrist. The Scientists came back to her side and removed the object. She sat up and swung her legs off the bed.

'I'm definitely taller' she thought while placing her hand onto her head.

"Are you alright?" one of the Scientists asked.

"Yes, I believe so... it's just a head rush."

One of the Scientists ran a scanner over her and nodded to the project lead. "Congratulations Marissa, you are now twenty years old."

They ran a few more tests to check if her genetic composition remained greatly unchanged, and then took her up to her room. When they left, she had found someone had replaced her wardrobe with clothes to fit her new body, a few moments later she felt tired and slept for the rest of the day.

Three days later Marissa walked along the 'road' it was just a long power conduit cutting across the landscape lined tall trees and mountains. She presumed the other subjects were all being prepped for the final stage, she had slipped out to go for a walk, and it may be the last time she may be able to walk for a long time. She eventually took a telaporter to the facility in the Apex Station and was met by the Science team.

"Are you ready to begin Marissa?" The Project lead asked.

"Yes, I am. The walk was relaxing."

They led her to a room with a few pods. "This is a relatively painless procedure, but please lie back in the pod and relax." Marissa sighed and stepped into an open pod. She leaned against the padding and the Scientists closed the pod hatch. "We are beginning in three...two...one."

Marissa's arms and legs were forcefully clamped down and a bright white light went slowly down the side of the pod. Through the small window she saw the scientists nod at a screen that showed her and press another switch. The machines pitch changed and her mind started to fade. It was like drifting off to sleep but there was a raging headache. Her body spasmed and strained against the restraints. The headache intensified but the spasms lessened and she lost muscle control. Marissa cried out in pain with the last ounce of energy. Then it was dark. The headache was gone, and she couldn't feel her head. In fact, she couldn't even feel anything. There was a series of clicks and a beep and the words '_Transfer Complete' _ flashed in her vision. Strangely words like '_System diagnostics' _and '_Sensor readings' _were present on the black background. Suddenly Marissa's vision lit up and she saw the Scientists moving around the pod she was in a moment earlier. Something clicked and she seemed to drop down a little. She thought about moving forward and she move closer to them. They looked up and stared at her; the Lead took a data-pad off a table and walked up to her.

"How do you feel Marissa?" He asked.

Marissa pondered the question for a moment then replied. "I don't

feel anything; my sense of feeling is gone."

"That was expected," he pressed something on the data-pad and then tapped her shell.

Oddly she felt the tap resonate through her shell. "I felt that..." She said.

"Good, alright he-" Everyone dropped. Marissa just stared. An eerie silence filled the room. She quickly flew out of the Apex station passing bodies lying on the ground. Their life signs were flat, they were all dead. The facilities official AI sent out a flash bulletin that said, _"HALO INSTALLATIONS HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED_"

She couldn't believe it. They had activated it and killed everyone... She couldn't cry, it wasn't physically possible, but she whimpered as she soared over her region heading for the hangar. She wanted out, to get away from the death. Although deep down she knew it was the same everywhere else, if not worse. She had understood why they had done it, but it was just too much for her. At the hangar she stared out into the deep ocean. She wasn't leaving. Suddenly the AI made an announcement. _"Attention- Inbound Shuttle. Prepare for docking procedures_"

Marissa didn't understand. The Halo's should have killed anything... unless it was Flood. Marissa called the other subjects and informed them on what happened. A detachment of Sentinels arrived a few moments later and prepared for the shuttles arrival.

The shuttle came to a halt smoothly. The others had arrived and waited in the control room. The shuttle settled and the Sentinels approached the door.

****August 22 2552 (human calendar) 2115 hours****

****UNSC Decommissioned Weapons Storage Facility 2, Standard IV****

****GSGT. Eric Green****

Gunnery Sergeant Eric Green rode a Warthog through a deep tunnel. The tunnel didn't look much different from a natural tunnel, except for the occasional support beam or check point. The driver swerved to avoid a pile of rocks from a large cave in. Eric looked up and saw the calm afternoon sky. The Hog slowed at a large door. On either side Scorpion tanks were buried up to their access hatches. A Marine walked over to a switch and opened the massive door. The door slowly creaked over rusty rails and revealed a cement tunnel. At the end of that, the Warthog pulled into a humid motor pool and parked near an elevator. Eric hopped out of the passenger seat and walked toward the Armory. As he passed a pillar he was ambushed from behind.

"Eric!" A woman yelled into his ear.

"What Alex?" He replied while turning towards her and twisting free of his wife's grip. She was wearing the usual UNSC Technician Jumpsuit but with the top open.

She stepped back and shifted her hips. "The Captain wants to see you in the Ops center."

"Tell him I'll be right down." He said.

"Yes sir." Alex replied and headed down the stairs.

Eric removed his helmet and whipped the sweat off his forehead. He entered the Armory and handed his DMR to the attendant.

"The scope got hit by some rocks, can you check it out to see if there's any problems with it? It won't stay zeroed in," he said.

"We'll get right on that Sergeant Green." The Attendant replied taking Eric's side arm as well.

"How long until they get the air vents fixed?" Eric asked glancing at a thermostat on the wall.

"Well Maintenance crew is busy fixing up some Vultures, but they hope to fix it next week."

"Ah, alright."

"We're low on ammunition though. Fire team Zulu had to pull out so fast they left their Scorpion and four crates of ammo behind." The Attendant sighed.

"Fire team Zulu... weren't they in the suburbs of Lowry?" Eric asked.

"Yeah... Well I'll get on your weapons."

"Alright thanks." Eric left the Armory and walked over the stairs, but just as he opened the door the elevator dinged open. Two Server Technicians rolled a cart of computers into the elevator. Eric stepped on board, "You guys going down to the Ops center?"

"Yes Sergeant," one replied.

The elevator doors closed and they plunged into the dark. They passed the two levels of civilians; almost half a million people were able to evacuate the bunker system that used to be surplus vehicle storage. The elevator stopped on sub-level- 4 and opened to reveal the Ops center. The Techs rolled the computer cart out and into a computer room. The Ops center itself was pretty empty except for a large screen and a few portable computers. Eric walked up to a man standing by a Tech on a computer.

"Captain." Eric saluted.

"Sergeant Green, good to have you back. I need you for a recovery mission." He picked up a data-pad and continued. "I take it you've heard about Zulu?"

"Yes sir, I have."

"Alright, I need you and a squad to go recover the ammunition. They left behind a Scorpion, but that is a secondary objective. We'll need that ammo son, with no contact with HIGHCOM or any ships heading in this direction, and the fact that the Covenant bastards seem to be

stranded here as well, means that the only way to survive here is to wipe the other out. This mission is of high importance so your team will be mostly made up of the Spartans."

"Sir, the Spartans? Are you sure you want me to command them?"

"Yes Sergeant I am, I'm sure you'll do fine. By the way, latest recon shows the Covenant have moved Scarabs into that area."

"Oh...Shit... When do we leave sir?"

"As soon as possible. Your team is waiting on Pelican Bravo four-three-five, good luck Sergeant." The Captain saluted and went back to work.

Eric returned the salute and walked over to the stairs. He stepped on to the hangar deck and watched the Mechanics work on the various air vehicles. Eric found Bravo 435 in the prep zone and saw the Spartans looking over their weapons. There was only two other Marines in the Pelican, Williams and Alex. They both looked very small compared to the Spartans. He nodded to Alex then climbed aboard and walked into the cockpit. He tapped the Pilot's shoulder and the Pilot turned around.

"Eric?"

"Mike," Eric replied.

"Man- I haven't seen you for a while."

"Yeah. Two weeks of ground ops." He sighed and rubbed his neck.

"That would do it. I take it you're the one leading the mission?"

"Yeah," Eric said. "Come out and I'll brief everyone." Eric walked into the troop bay and got the Spartans attention. "We're being deployed to recover some ammunition and a Scorpion tank left by Fire team Zulu in the suburbs of Lowry. Aerial recon reports that the Covenant have deployed heavy armor in the area along with a Scarab."

Eric heard one of the Spartans sigh. The Covenant Scarabs were not the common ones the UNSC has been fighting. These were tougher and their main cannon could down a Pelican in one shot. The rear hatch closed and the Pelican eased up and flew out of the Hangar. Eric sat in the corner and hear metal clanging against each other above him. He looked up and saw two Mongooses hanging from the ceiling.

"Mike- Who the hell put Mongooses on the roof?"

"Oh, sorry didn't tell you yet. It's the only way to get the all the ammo in the back."

"Well is it safe?" Eric moved into the Navigators seat.

"Yeah, that's what the Mechanic said when she welded on the racks."

Eric had a sudden realization. "Fuck- I forgot to pick up my weapons from the Armory."

"Don't worry," Mike said calmly. "Alex dropped them off for you before you showed."

He flipped a switch and a weapon rack extended out bellow Eric's seat. His DMR and M6D pistol sat there. He picked them out and placed them in their places.

The Pelican roared over the ocean and approached the shore across the continent. The beach came up fast and the Pelican initiated a fast 180 degree turn 15 feet above the sand. The hatch opened and the Spartans launched themselves out of the troop bay and set up defense positions. Eric hopped out and ran up a sand dune.

"Stay safe guys- I'll be waiting for you. Out."

__Author Update:Well here it is. The Beginning of LORC: RTS. Hope you like.__

2. Act I Pt 2 Recovery and Discovery

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act I Part 2

__**Recovery and Discovery**__

100,000 Years ago:

The Hatch opened and a Soldier stepped out. The Sentinels scanned him and reported that he was free of Flood infestation. He waved to the others in the shuttle and they walked off too. Marissa watched them as they disembarked. The last woman looked familiar... It was her mother. Marissa flew to her. "Mother?" She cried.

Her mother looked around quickly. "Marissa? Where are you?"

"I'm right here," She stopped in front of her face. "I took your place on the project- they made me one of these things..."

"I can't believe you're alive- I looked for you everywhere." Her mother hugged her shell.

"I looked for you too- you didn't come up on any searches."

"I'm so sorry I didn't make it on the same transport as you, they shut the doors before I could get on." Her mother leaned back and looked around. "Where are all the others?"

Marissa was quiet a moment and looked down. "They're all dead...The Halo array was activated..."

"What? Oh my- I wish the Humans didn't destroy their research ten thousand years ago"

"How did you survive Mother?"

"We..." She paused in thought. "We were in Slip-space. But I don't

know what happened to the ship we departed from; they were heading for one of the Halo's for refueling."

Marissa and her mother went to the teleporter room and jumped to the mountain facility. They checked on the cloning machinery and found that it was severely damaged.

"What happened to the cloning device?" Her mother asked.

"I don't know... It looks like someone smashed it."

"Why would someone do that? That was the crucial part of what they wanted to do here." She paced around the remains.

"Maybe someone accidentally crushed it, the Halo activation was a surprise. I mean- look" Marissa motioned to a part of an Enforcer Sentinel. "That could have fallen onto it..."

"Hmm, maybe you're right. That would make a lot more sense than sabotage."

"Anyhow Mother, I'm very glad you survived. But we must find a way to fix this machine if we are to survive." Marissa said as she followed her mother out the door.

**August 23 2552 (human calendar) 1124 hours
>Covenant Occupied Lowry, Standard IV
GSGT. Eric Green**

"Stay safe guys- I'll be waiting for you. Out."

The Pelican moved back and flew into the distance. Eric crawled on his stomach to the top of the sand dune. He counted 2 Scarabs in the distance and a few Spirits patrolling the airspace above the town. A Spartan crawled up next to him and so did Williams.

"What are we dealing with Sergeant?" The Spartan asked in a feminine voice. _'A204' _was stenciled to the side of her helmet.

"There's two Scarabs in the distance and some Spirit patrols..." Eric looked over the ridge again and noticed something new in the distance. "Shit..."

"What is it Sergeant?" She asked.

"The Covie bastards have a base three clicks from the objective." Eric zoomed in on the base, but then a crunch from below and he glanced down. An Elite patrol was standing on the street. Eric hit the dirt. "Fuck- Elite patrol. Just below us. Take em' out."

The next thing Eric knew, he was watching the Spartans silently slide down the ridge and creep up behind the Elites. Each Spartan grabbed an Elites head and quickly jerked them sideways. The necks snapped and the Elites fell to the ground in crumpled heaps.

"Alright let's move. Four story building- ten o'clock. Secure it." Eric ordered as he and Williams sprinted behind the Spartans.

They smashed through the front door and the Spartans had already fanned out and started checking the rooms. Eric and Williams headed up the stairs and began to search the second floor. By the time they

had finished, the Spartans had already finished the remaining two floors. Eric went up to the roof and knelt down on his knee. He pulled out a pair of binoculars and scanned the next block. Eric spotted the Scorpion next to a bunch of crates.

"Mike," Eric radioed, "We've got eyes on the objective, will call you in when it's secured."

"_Rodger that Green_." Mike responded.

Eric walked down to the ground floor with the others behind him. They hit the side of the building and looked around the corner. The road was torn up but otherwise it was clear so they moved up. Eric saw the front of the Tank just behind the building ahead of them.

"Alex, Williams, move up. Spartans cover her."

The Spartans nodded in unison and Alex and Williams sprinted across the street. They jumped into the building through a broken window, and then waved for them to cross. Eric sent two Spartans and they made it across just fine. Eric and the last Spartan ran out in to the street and about halfway through a massive leg slammed into the ground. Eric dove into a crater in the street and prayed that the Scarab crew would not notice him or the Spartan. The Scarab remained in the intersection for a moment then it started to continue marching down the street. Eric breathed a sigh of relief and sprinted to the small shop. Eric skidded to a stop on the water covered floor and the Spartan paused in the doorway.

"Alright," Eric paused to catch his breath. "Let's go get that ammo, then get the hell out of here."

Eric looked out the back door and found himself looking down the barrel of a Scorpion Main Battle Tank. The team fanned out around the position and collected the various ammunition crates strewn about the compound. Eric radioed for Mike and when he heard the roar of an approaching Pelican he lit a flare.

The Pelican soared overhead and running dark. Mike settled it over the Scorpion tank and there was a loud 'Clunk' and the Scorpion was clamped on. The Pelican landed and the hatch opened, flooding the area with red light. The Spartans lifted the heavy crates while Eric and the others collected weapons and smaller ammunition crates. Just as they were about to finish when Mike came over the radio.

"_Eric! I'm reading a squadron of Banshees and possible a Seraph heading right for our position_."

"Copy that Mike- Okay that's it guys. We've got the Covie's attention and most, if not all the ammunition."

Eric helped Alex and Williams aboard and jumped into the troop bay. The Spartans buckled in next to the ammo and stowed their weapons in the receptacle above their seat. Mike lifted off and sped off for the ocean at max speed. Eric walked into the cock pit and sat in the Navigators seat.

"Thanks for getting us out of there Mike." Eric said.

"Well, we're not out of it yet!" Mike said quickly while pushing down

on the stick. The Pelican dropped to less than 50 feet above the ocean. "The Seraph is following us."

"Shit." was all Eric could say.

A light on the control board flashed red. "Oh, fuck. It fired some sort of missile!" Mike yelled.

"Can you evade it!" Eric quickly blurted out.

"No! It's too fast!"

Suddenly there was an explosion and Eric slammed his head into the control panel. He blacked out a moment later.

Eric blinked his eyes, his vision gradually returned. Something dripped into his mouth, it was cool and salty. He turned on his flashlight and looked around. He was staring out the rear hatch... there was a crack in its window and water was slowly dripping in. There was a shifting to his right and the mongooses that had been mounted to the roof were snapped from their restraints and blocking his way to the rest of the ship. The top one was lifted out of the way and placed on the side by one of the Spartans. The others had their helmets off and were quietly conversing with each other.

"Sergeant, glad you're alright." The one who had lifted the Mongoose out of the way said.

Eric noticed a number was sketched on to his chest piece '098'. "How are the others, Sierra oh-nine-eight?" He asked.

"They are fine, however Corporal Williams has a bruised rib and a minor concussion, but that is the extent of the injuries." Eric nodded and the Spartan turned back to the conversation with the others.

Eric made his way over the fallen ammunition boxes to the cockpit and hopped into the familiar Navigation seat. Somehow in the crash he had been flung into the back and buried by the Mongooses. "Mike, status update." He said.

"Well... we're under water." Mike said.

"I can see that." Eric sighed.

"We've been sinking for the past three hours, and we sink like a rock. We're close to the sea floor."

"What? That's nearly forty thousand feet!" Eric was stunned.

"I know- there is no way to surface from this in what's left of our Pelican. But something strange is happening. We've also been drifting towards the continental shelf."

"So what? Sea currents are probably doing it." Eric said.

"That's what I thought at first. Then I bounced Sonar off the shelf face and found that there is a rectangular object imbedded into the wall. And we're headed straight for it."

"Let me know when we get in visual range- and activate the headlights, we won't be able to see a damn thing." Eric said heading back into the troop bay to check on his wife.

Two hours later Mike called Eric up through the humid, thickening air. "Eric we have a visual on the object."

Eric came into the cockpit moments later and stared over Mike's shoulder. "What the Hell is that...?" He was looking at a light grey box lined with dim blue lights. What was left of the Pelican's lights illuminated massive ancient coral structures.

"I don't know..." Mike said quietly.

The others crowded into the small cock-pit and watched as the pelican approached the odd box. The Hangar itself was large enough for the main body of a Frigate to just fit inside. "I-is it Covenant?" Williams asked.

"No, Covies like purple. Besides, look at that coral. This has been here a very long time." Mike said.

"Well it's not human either. Something, someone else made it, but whoever did is long gone."

"Well that's somewhat relieving." Williams commented. The Pelican entered the massive alien hangar perfectly centered. It was placed on the ground near the back where there was very little coral.

"Well this solves our problems." Mike said sarcastically.

Suddenly there was a loud metallic click and water started to drain from the hangar. "Automated systems?" Williams asked quietly.

"I hope so..."

AU: Well part two of Return to Standard. Getting close to where Ryau and Naki get re introduced.

Read and review. No Flaming please. Rest of Story is Posted in a different story

3. Act I Pt 3 Welcome back Major

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act I Part 3

**Welcome Back Major**

**August 24 2552 (human calendar) 1124 hours
>Unknown Location, Standard IV
GSGT. Eric Green
>_

_"I hope so..." _

Alex stared out the window.

Mike looked down at a cracked screen on the control board and said.

"Well- there's oxygen out there. And we were just going to die in here, so why don't we check it out?"

"I don't see why not, maybe whoever made this place had a way back to the surface." Eric said. "Open the hatch- lets get out of here."

"Right away sir." Mike pressed a button and the troop bay hatch creaked open.

"Alright lets check it out."

The Spartans were first out with their weapons and swept the once flooded room. The entire area was bathed in a shimmering blue light from a Energy barrier that blocked the way they had entered. Fish flapped in the shallow water that remained. Eric and the others stepped out and looked at the massive pillars of Coral that covered the centre of the hangar. There was a glint of shining metal revealed in patches under the Coral. As soon as Williams stepped on to a crack in the flooring plate, it lit up with light. The light seemed to pulse in the direction of the back wall.

"Well I guess lets follow this. See where it leads." Eric said.

They followed the lights on the floor along the side of the massive coral formation and the sound of rushing wind became louder. Mysterious crates sat at awkward positions along the ground and the Spartans used them for cover. Eric and the other skidded to a stop. Before them was a massive window. A hole was ripped through the hole and water dripped to the ground far bellow.

"Where the Hell are we?" Williams whispered.

The window overlooked a massive open space. The floor was over a thousand feet bellow and mountains shot into the sky. Two massive walls rose up and met in the center and above those was a massive bright spot. Clouds drifted past the windows and rain poured in certain areas, in the distance the edges of a ceiling and a wall could barely be seen.

"I don't know... but we're nowhere near the surface." Mike said.

There was a click from behind that echoed off the walls of the hangar. The Spartans turned around and scanned the area with their rifles. There was a loud cracking sound then a synthetic humming. A blue light reflected off a coral outcrop. A floating machine resembling a unmanned news camera came around the corner. It just sat there hovering thirty feet away from the group.

"Is it hostile?" Spartan 098 asked.

"Doesn't seem like it. No one wants whatever is still running this place to be hostile so hold your fire. But keep your guard up." Eric ordered.

"Yes Sir." 098 replied.

The machine hovered there for a few moments, the Spartans helmet lights reflected of blue and red trim along its booms. A small red

laser swept over the humans and then the machine beeped. A few seconds later it quickly flew directly above Williams' head. Williams leaned back and slipped on a fish. He stumbled back and fell out the window.

"Williams!" Eric yelled. The machine flew down out the hole and followed Williams down. The machine extended something and it grabbed Williams. Eric and the other watched as they both disappeared into the fog bellow. Eric jumped back from the edge and slammed his fist to the wall. "Damn-it!"

"Eric its not your fault but Williams may even still be alive," Mike said.

"Still. We should have been more careful and stayed away from that hole," Eric said angrily. "Now lets find a way down there and follow that machine. It will take us to whatever still runs this place."

Eric and his team had been running through the forest for the past 2 hours and their fully loaded Mongooses barely passed the trees and rocks that crowded the small dirt path Alex had found at the base of the waterfall. They had lost track of the Machine that had Williams but one of the Spartans had seen it take a sharp left around a tree up ahead on the trail.

"God if I'm going to have a last meal I want it to be a steak," Mike said randomly while running alongside Eric.

"Well the best you're going to get is a MRE 'cause it's all we've got." Eric responded.

"Oh and while I'm at it, a Warthog will do nicely at this point."

"Shut up Mike."

"Sir, We're coming up on the turn off tree." Spartan A204 stated.

"Alright lets hang a left people." No sooner than Eric had said that, he sprinted straight into a metal wall. A low twang of metal vibrating echoed through the forest.

"Eric are you alright?" Alex asked.

"Yeah I'm..." He trailed off as he stared at a series of number etched into the lower half of the metal wall. In fact, It was not a metal wall at all. It was... a Warthog. The Warthog was covered in vines and ferns but its basic shape was still recognisable.

"Whoa how'd that get down here?" Alex asked.

"Who cares- check if there's steak anywhere." Mike said quickly.

Eric looked around and found a package all sealed up on the ground. When he had read its contents he looked down in amazement. "Freeze dried... Steak."

"Yes!" Mike pumped his arm then looked to the sky. "Beer will rain from the sky!" Nothing happened. "Oh well, it was worth a try," Mike shrugged.

"Mike, you're an idiot" Alex said punching his shoulder.

Eric stepped away from the Warthog and looked to his left and then to his right. He was standing in a clearing wide enough for a Scorpion and long enough to count as a road. A thin layer of plants grew in the clearing and it was relatively flat. Spartan 098 knelt down and swiped some dirt and grass from a thin patch. A pulse of blue light reflected off his visor.

"Hey James- grab a shovel from that hog and bring it over here" Spartan 098 said talking to Spartan A103. He grabbed a battered shovel and walked over to 098. "Let's move some of this dirt." Together they uncovered a long metal path. Lines cut into it pulsed blue in the direction the Warthog was facing. Eric stood over them and looked at the metallic platform.

"Lets follow this, it leads somewhere." Eric said.

"Sir! You might want to see this." Spartan A204 said coming from behind a tree.

Eric walked over to where the Spartan stood. He stared at what he saw. A warthog had impaled itself onto a tree. A Human skeleton wearing shreds of clothes was sitting against another tree with a odd chunk of machinery in its hand. He saw a second skeleton in what was left of the drivers seat with the back of its skull missing. "Sir, these are civilian model Warthogs, there's also a rental agreement for both of the hogs dated 2549. These were civies sir. If they had Hogs then they got down here a different way."

"And that means maybe a way out" Eric said. "Spartan one-o-three and zero-nine-eight I want you to take Private Green and see if you can find the other way out. We'll meet back here in twelve hours."

"Yes sir," both the Spartans responded.

"You better be in one piece Eric when we get back." Alex said as they left.

"Oh I will be Alex- I'm worried about you." Eric chuckled. As soon as Alex and the two Spartans disappeared into the forest Eric turned to the remaining squad. "We're going after Williams."

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**July 21, 2555 (human calendar) 2124 hours  
>Zelso State Military Academy, State of Zelso, Sanghelios<br>SpecOps  
Major [NULL]  
>Training Major Ryau 'Cinotee<br>_**
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Ryau pushed up off the ground and continued to do push-ups like he had done everyday for the past 3 years after the Device had screwed with his and Naki's age back to 16. He jumped up and sprinted for the obstacle course. Ryau ran along a beam and dodged spinning . He launched himself over a metal pole and rolled under another one. Near the end Ryau stopped on a platform and watched his Recruits run by on the same course. Not one of them fell into the pool foul smelling water bellow the course this time. They finished the course and

headed over to the track. Ryau followed behind them and keep those that were falling behind in line. Once they finished their 8 laps he sent them back to their Common room. Ryau made sure they got there fine and headed to the Communications building. Inside he sat at a COM booth and dialed the number for some one he deeply cared about.

_"Hello Ryau," _Naki replied from the Zelso State University.

"Good evening, how was your day?" He asked.

"Oh, it was good. My students learned about the Forerunner tech today. I look foreword to seeing you this week."

"Yeah, my recruits graduate this Wednesday. They've been doing very well. I cannot wait until I see you in person, its been what? three months." Ryau said.

_"Ryau, its only been two weeks," _Naki giggled.

"Well it feels like its been that long, anyway I need to get back to the common room and enforce lights out. They find it funny that I'm practically the same age as them so they tend to think they can get away with stuff."

"Yeah, they all think I'm a intern or something," Naki said.

"Well see you on Saturday, I love you."

"I love you too Ryau, see you then."

The screen when dark and Ryau headed back to the common room as the sky darkened to black. While he had gotten a position at the Zelso State Military Academy, Naki when to the University and accepted an offer to teach advanced science. The jobs were only temporary until they came of age to serve in the military again, Which as of yesterday Ryau was. Only he had to wait until August 14 for Naki to be with him. Ryau arrived at the door to the common room and keyed it open. Inside the recruits talked amongst themselves on their bunks or at the tables in the center of the room.

"Recruits- Lights out!" Ryau barked.

"Yes Major!" They all responded and quickly moved to their bunks.

"Early morning skirmish tomorrow. Be ready." Ryau hit the lights and sat into his own bed "Just two more days," he thought.

That morning the recruits awoke and began their morning routine. Showers, dress for morning exercises and run out to the field to wait for him. Ryau walked out and led the exercises with ease. Once they were finished he led them across the academy and into the forest where he proceeded to run them 20 miles. They all returned to the common room out of breath and Ryau paused before going on.

"Recruits, don you're skirmish gear. We're having a friendly competition with Inbr 'Elaas recruits at the VMA's Skirmish field two."

"Major, that is in the Sea of Kar'un, why do we not host it in the Kama Mountains?" Endesa 'Nelum asked as she strapped her chest piece on.

"We've been training in the mountains since we began. Both you and Inbr's recruits have trained on this Academies fields. The VMA Island is new to all of you." Ryau replied.

"Understood Major." Endesa and Asau 'Asaos were 2 of his best recruits and usually part of the best squad.

Once everyone was armored up Ryau took them out to a waiting Shadow and loaded them up. Along the way he gave them a general overview of the field. 4 large islands, heavily forested with a few small structures. After a hour the Shadow stopped at a dock and Ryau ordered his recruits onto the small ferry. Inbr already had his recruits on the island and Ryau thought of something.

"Recruits, even though the skirmish officially begins when we reach the tree line do not be caught off guard. Be ready the second we hit the beach."

"Yes Major," They chanted.

The boat hit sand and the recruits vaulted themselves over the sides and into the water. The first squad hid in the tree line and was followed by another. Only one left.

"Endesa, Asau, Shau. Move up I'll cover you."

4. Act I Pt 4 Bring It

****_The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act I Part 4_****

****_Bring it_****

**August 24 2552 (human calendar) 1149 hours
>**Unknown Location, Standard IV
>**GSGT. Eric Green**

* * *

><p>The Warthog coughed to life and Mike revved the engine. "Three year old hydrogen fuel still working, that's great."<p>

"Alright, Spartan hop on the back. This thing has to lead somewhere important."

"Affirmative sir," She said while climbing aboard. The Hogs shocks recoiled from the Spartans added weight. The Warthog sped down the clearing following the direction of the pulses in the metal plates. After about 4 hours the Warthog came to a slow stop on a bridge.

"Well... that's it on our tank of gas," Mike said.

"We're walking from here, we'll save the fuel in the cans for the way

back." Eric hopped out of the Hog and started down the path behind the Spartan.

They walked down the path for about 2 or 3 miles when they came to a small alien structure. There was a tower with a beam of light coming out of the top shooting into the sky. Eric walked up a moss covered ramp and stood by a small door. The glass was fogged and the door crack was filled with dirt and mud, it hadn't been opened for a long time. He stood back and looked off the balcony. As far as he could tell the path took them all the way to the mountains atleast 200 miles away. Eric turned to go back down the ramp and found himself staring at one of the Machines. It hovered in front of him with red and gold trim.

"Uhh Mike. Where are you?" Eric said not lifting his gaze off the Machine.

"Yes Eric?"

"Come over here." Eric stepped to the side to see if he was blocking the Machine's way. The Machine floated back infront and continued to block his path. A small appendage disengaged from the lower part of the Machine and glowed a bright blue. 3 other grasper's extended out of the Machine's booms. "Shit." Eric began to back up and the Machine continued to hold the same distance.

Mike came around the corner of the structure and saw the Machine.
"Oh... shit."

"Yeah, now I'm going to jump. If it tries to follow shoot it."

"Alright, I'm ready," Mike brought up his MA5.

"Three...two...one!" Eric lept over the edge and prepared to hit the ground 20 feet bellow, but he never did. Something held onto his armor straps and he dangled just a few feet off the ground. "Mike shoot it!" 4 shots pinged off the Machine then they were directed at something else. Eric looked to Mike to see him firing at another group of machines, similar sounds were coming from the Spartans location. "Fall back! Get to the Warthog. I'll meet yo-" Something sharp poked his neck and he dipped out of consciousness.

Eric blinked his eyes in blackness, he felt something poking his arm. Light faded in and he saw himself staring at a Jackal. He had not yet regained enough strength to move but his headset's translation software picked up some of what it was saying.

"_Can we eat it? I think its dead_," the Jackal chattered.

Eric reached his hand to his pistol holster, there was nothing there. He went for his knife, nothing there either. The Jackal squawked and jumped off of him. Eric rolled himself off his back and prepared to lunge at the Jackal. Then he noticed that the Jackal was not wearing any armor, just a simple tunic. Eric jumped at the Jackal but was immediately pulled back as soon as he grabbed its neck. A large figure stood over Eric, it lifted him up and set him on his feet.

"You are about to fight for your life Human. You are lucky, these

fight rarely happen." The figure said in a deep voice. Eric turned and found himself staring at the chest of a Covenant Elite. Eric backed up and tripped on his helmet. The Elite wore a tattered body suit and barely any armor.

"What the Hell are you talking about you damn Covie." Eric grabbed a small metal pole off the ground and readied it in his hands.

"Save your strength for later Reen." The Elite wrongly pronounced his name, but somehow spoke good English, taught by the Grunts no doubt. "We are all prisoners in... this place."

"Fuck you split-lip." Eric spat and lunged forward at the Elite and swung at him.

The Elite grabbed the pole and wrestled it out of Eric's hands. "Reen understand this- the only way to escape this prison is to win one of these fights."

Now defenceless Eric listened. "Fine, tell me about these 'fights'."

"The bastard Oracle here will choose two prisoners to fight together versus other two for its own entertainment. The winners will go free."

"Sounds simple enough, who is my ally?"

"Me, I am Ryka 'Cimueta'."

Eric paused a moment. "Damn it... Wait, why aren't you trying to kill me?"

"The reason that Sangheili fight Humans is because of a lie. We met a friendly Oracle when we first arrived is nothing holy about the rings. It told us what happened to our Gods, the Forerunners. Those Sangheili that are prisoners here feel deep regret and dishonor for their actions against you humans." Ryka said and tossed the pole away from the two. "However the Jiralhanae refuse to believe the Oracle and stay sided with the Prophets. That is why you are here in this camp."

"Whoah, there's a lot more to you split-jaws than I thought." Eric said with a laugh.

There was a beep and Ryka just repoded with a cold stare. "Believe what you want Human, but the time has come."

With that the wall behind Ryka opened and flooded the small room with sunlight. Two of the Machines floated in and pushed him and Ryka out into the hot sand of a desert. The compound he was in was a collection of small sandblasted huts surrounded by a high wall.

"So where is this fight?" Eric said looking around the compound.

"We will be taken there by telaporter, everyone else is already there," Ryka said.

Eric and Ryka walked on to a black platform. "By wh-" they disappeared and reappeared in a blood stained room. "-at..." Eric

finished his sentence.

There was a buzzer and Ryka jumped away, "The fight begins! Watch out Reen."

Across the room a Brute and a Hunter materialized. Immediately the Hunter and Brute split off into different directions. The Brute went after Ryka and the Hunter charged Eric. He jumped out of the way and searched the area for a weapon. To his left he saw a pile of bones in a corner. He ran over and picked up a leg bone with a sharp end. Eric turned back to the Hunter and saw that the upper portion of the wall had lowered and at least twenty or so Covenant sat watching. Between them in the center was a different Machine. It was round and had a red glowing eye.

"_How very stereotypical,_" Eric thought.

The Hunter finished it's charge and brought its right arm to fire, momentarily forgetting it had no weapon but it's size. Eric took this opportunity and ran to the postie side of the room. The Hunter roared and charged again towards Eric. When He was about to be crushed by the Hunters massive shield he rolled to the side and tried to cut the exposed worms. He only cut a few and the Hunter roared in pain. Eric jumped back as the Hunter swung backwards. Eric realized he couldn't take the Hunter down by himself so he ran. Ryka was engaged in hand to hand combat with the Brute underneath the spectators. Eric ran to the Brute, the Hunter followed in blind rage. He slid down between the Brutes legs and scrambled out of the way. The Hunter slammed into the Brute and then the wall at full speed causing blood to spray all around. Eric lept up and sprinted to Ryka who was shocked at what he had witnessed.

"We need to take down that Hunter." Eric said slightly out of breath.

"Yes, Reen we do," Ryka responded. "You distract that Mgalekgolo and I will take it down."

"Fine!" Eric ran to the center of the large room and watched the blood splattered Hunter back away from the wall.

The Hunter slowly lumbered towards Eric, dragging its shield along the ground in a defeated manner. Eric noticed why, when it had collided with the wall its massive shield cut most of the worms in its abdomen and only a few worms hung together. Ryka grabbed a piece of metal broken from the wall by the Hunter and slid its serrated edge through the remaining worms. They snapped and the hunter fell apart, worms just slid out of the armor and spilled across the floor. There was a buzz again and the Sphere Machine, Eric guessed that was the Oracle, floated down to where Eric and Ryka stood.

"Congratulations Sanghelil Major and Human Sargent. You have successfully defeated your opponents. You are now free to go, your equipment is waiting for you outside." The Floating Sphere said both in English and Sangheilian.

"_Thank You Holy one_" Ryka said in his own language bowing his head, even with the language difference Eric could sense the anger in his voice.

"Thanks Sir," Eric said not sure what to call it.

"The honor is mine, now you must leave before the others decide they want to try to escape." Almost as if on cue an Elite Minor lept off the edge of the observation area and sprinted for the now open door. But before the Elite could get too far two of the first machines he had seen descended upon him. The Elite grabbed a Machine and threw it to the ground. It exploded and the Elite continued his run for the door. A massive Machine came around the corner of the arena, it activated two blue shields over its front and aimed its main weapons at the Elite. A laser projected from the Machine and struck the Elite in the chest, Eric was about to . His body from the neck down to his waist burnt away and what was left fell to the ground.

"I would rather not kill any more of my play toys, so if you will... leave," the Sphere said.

Eric and Ryka did not waste any time leaving the arena. They walked into a dark forest and the door silently closed behind them. They came across their gear on a tree stump not far from the massive wall that seemed to cut through the region they were in. For Ryka there was a small pack and a Needle rifle. He picked up the pack and swung it over his back, a small glowing cylinder fell out and to the ground. Eric picked it up and a small holographic display popped up, it was a picture of a small female looking Elite on top of a Younger looking Ryka. Ryka turned and looked at Eric looking at the picture.

_ "My daughter... She's a scientist." _

**July 21, 2555 (human calendar) 2235 hours
>**Varo Military Academy, State of Zelso, Sanghelios

>**SpecOps Major [NULL]
>**Training Major Ryau 'Cinotee
>

* * *

><p>"Endesa, Asau. Move up I'll cover you."

Ryau scanned the ridge above the Recruits as Endesa and Asau ran for the trees. Nothing showed itself but there was some movement in the brush up there. Once the last of the Recruits had made it across Ryau sprinted the sand and hopped behind a bush with a recruit named Shan. His objective was to supervise the Recruits movements while participating in the skirmish himself. He and Inbr had been given permission to conduct this exercise well into the night and it was already late.

_ "All teams- advance and watch your back." _Ryau radioed to his Recruits.

The various squad leaders reported in and their squad markers faded from his Heads Up Display as they left the area. Endesa ordered her three squad mates up the hill. Ryau followed them up, remembering the path to the small base on this island. They went over the ridge and headed down into a heavily forested valley. Shan lept onto a down tree and activated his night vision.

"Endesa, there is an enemy scouting party just on the other side of the river," Shan said over the radio. _

"_Shan, this is the Major. I'll be taking charge of this operation, even in the field you'll be taking orders from someone else," _Ryau said. "Now, Asau go link up with Shan and wait for my signal. Endesa you and I are going to flank right."

"Understood Major." Both Endesa and Asau said at the same time.

Ryau and Endesa broke off and went to the right and took a position behind some large rocks. The enemy scouting party was holding position just on the other side of the river, they seemed to be waiting for something. Two more enemy team members showed up and the scouting party looked ready to leave. "Alright engage the enemy," Ryau said.

On the other side of the valley Ryau heard Asau and Shan open fire the enemy scout team then Endesa's practice Beam rifle cracked off and struck a scout in the head. His armor locked up and administered a knock out drug. Ryau fired his Needle rifle and struck a recruit a few times and he exploded causing two others around him to lock down as well. The holographic additions to the training weapons really paid off in realistic properties. Asau and Shan's Carbine rounds finished off the last of the Scouting team and they regrouped on the bank of the river.

"Good job warriors. Let's keep moving," Ryau said and they headed for the center island

Ryau awoke that Wednesday in the common room with his Recruits. He sat up and stood at the end of the bunks. "Congratulations Recruits, you are just hours away from finishing training. Just a year from now and you'll be in the Military if you'd still want to."

The Recruits responded with claps and donned their training armor. Ryau ran them through the Kama mountains for a good hour and then back to the Military Academy. They showered and suited up in their ceremonial armor, used for dances and other important events. Ryau did the same and took them over to the Councilor hall. Two Councilors came in and introduced themselves. In the main room various members of the recruits' families sat in chairs and waited for the ceremony to start. Ryau lead his Recruits onto the stage and took position next to Inbr. The ceremony began and Councilors lead the Recruits in reciting the new code that was created after the Great Schism. The Recruits placed their arms over their chests in salute and bowed their heads. "..._We will fight for and to protect Sanghelios and its people even to our dying breath_." They finished the final part of the oath and the Council declared them done with training.

Later that night Ryau walked around the Council hall, many Recruits now Warriors talked with family or ate at the buffet table. Two Sangheili Majors entered the hall and made their way to him. "Special Operations Major Ryau 'Cinotee?" One asked.

"Yes, that is me Major," Ryau said. "What can I do for you?"

"High Council has orders for you." The Major said handing him a data chip.

"I've been a SpecOps Major officially for thirty minutes and they already found something for me to do?" Ryau said chucking. "Very well thank you for the delivery." Ryau plugged the data chip into his data pad and the order popped on screen.

:/Subject: Return to Standard

_AU:

>Well here it is, part 4 hope you like. this ends Act 1 so Act 2 is dropping in October be on the look out at my Deviant Art for information on the State of Zelso

5. Act II Pt 1 All Together Now

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act II Part 1

All Together Now...

**July 23, 2555 (human calendar) 2123 hours
>Zelso State Military Academy Council Hall, State of Zelso, Sanghelios
SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [ACTIVE]
>

* * *

><p>:Subject: Return to Standard_
>SpecOps Major Ryau Cinotee,
>The Humans are planning a return trip the their colony of Standard IV. We were contacted by a LTCol. Hartford from the Office of Naval Intelligence with a request for you and a team of your choosing to accompany them due to you 'past' with Humanity on the voyage. They belive the planet to still be habitable due to information recovered from the Covenant Battle Net that the clolony was never glassed and the ships ordered to preform that action never returned. The Council approved their request and enclosed are your orders.

-Enclosed-

SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee -ZSMA, State of Zelso, Sanghelios

>Zelso State Military Academy
>Location of pick up: Varo-Cleavete Space Center
>On August 2 2555 (Human Callender) you are to report to the Varo-Cleavete Space Center with your chosen team of four and take the Earth passenger liner designated X-ray 2525 to Seattle, Earth. Upon arival you will be taken to the Human Customs center and issued leave passes for the layover of a few days. Once checked in with UNSC HIGHCOM you are under their command but your loyalties still belong to Sanghelios.
>Note: We know you may like to recruit some of your class but you can only choose warriors that are of age or will become of age to serve by August 17, 2555 when the mission is under way. Also you will be field testing the new Varo Class Combat Harness durring your mission.
>-High Council of Sanghelios

Ryau closed the orders and looked for the two Major Domos that had delivered the message but they seemed to have disappeared in to the crowd. He thought a moment about the location he would be going to, was it a mere coincidence that he would be sent the to his old home city in the alternate universe? Most likely it was so He pocketed his data pad and looked over his Warriors. Luckily his orders said he could choose warriors that would be of age right after Naki's birthday, so could have her with him officially in combat now that she was too trained as a SpecOps Major, but she will keep her rank as a SpecOps Science Major. As another bonus his top squad, Endesa, Asau and Shan, would also be of age by then. Shan was already the right age to serve. Ryau sat at the bar next to Endesa and got a local made beer, it had a stronger kick than it's human counterpart and had a much better taste in his opinion. He turned to her and tapped her glass with his bottle. "Endesa, I've got an idea for you, Asau and Shan. I've just been informed that I've been chosen to take part in a joint Op with the Humans, and I'd like for you to three to join me."

"Sir- Shan, Asau and I wanted to see our families before we deployed or anything," She said.

"Well as a Higher ranking soldier I could come and inform your families on what the planned mission is. Besides, we don't leave for a week."

"Oh, let me run it by the others then." Endesa went over to Asau and Shan at the buffet table. Ryau watched them talk, worst comes to worst he could just order them to be assigned to the mission. Endesa brought them back and Asau and Shan looked interested. "Sure, why not," Endesa said.

"Our parents live in Cleavete, they run the Nelume-Asaos Farms," Asau said. "Shan here lives in Vekat."

"I know where you guys live, I was you're Trainer after all," Ryau chuckled. "What brought you three to the ZSMA when the VMA was closer?"

"Our fathers went here," Shan said.

"Ah that explains it. And now that females are freely allowed to serve, not just in certin situations, you two could apply for a broader combat role," Ryau said. "Which is great."

Endesa and Asau laughed, "Yeah."

"Well I'll see you three in a few days," Ryau said.

"Good bye Major," They said.

Ryau stood from the bar and downed the rest of his drink. He nodded to his hopefull new squad and walked to the crowd to personally congratulate the rest of his Recruits. Later Ryau headed back to his common room for his last night in the Academy. Friday rolled around and Ryau drove to the University in his truck, it was basically an expanded Spectre that could seat 6 in an enclosed cabin. His drive through the Kama mountains was rather uneventful but he stopped at Ealras' cafe and got breakfast. Before he left he threw a cover over the back to keep his personal gear dry as he entered the rainy size

of the mountain range. Six hours after he had left the ZSMA he arrived in the parking lot of the University. Ryau went up to Naki's room and knocked on the door. A moment later the door opened and Naki stood there in a shower towel.

"Hello Ryau," She said.

"Good evening Naki, may I come in?"

"Of course." Naki said stepping out of the door way.

"Thanks," Ryau and Naki hugged and locked mandibles in a Sangheilian kiss.

"Its great to see you 'SpecOps Major'," Naki said slyly.

"It is great to see you too." Ryau responded with another kiss.

"So where are you taking me tonight?" Naki asked while going back into the wash room to finish getting ready.

"Well I was thinking about going to N`veks for dinner tonight."

"Oh N`veks? I love that place."

"Great, thought you did. I'm feeling like some Zupp Chau'Nia and some Morla bread."

"Mmmm... Thats good stuff." Naki said coming out of the wash room in her favorite dress.

"Yup, lets go," Ryau took her down to his truck and helped her into the passenger seat. He crawled into the back and sat in his seat. It rotated and retracted into the drivers seat and he drove off for the N`veks in Arica. Almost twenty minutes later he pulled into the N`veks and he and Naki got a table. They had ordered their food and enjoyed some good conversation before Ryau brought up the Standard Mission.

"Well Naki, I'm being deployed in a week..." He said.

"Oh... I wish I could come with you. But I do not come of age yet," She said sadly.

"Thats the thing, its a joint operation with the Humans, and we're going back to Standard IV."

"What- really? How does this relate to me?"

"Well they told me that even though we leave on the second you have to be of age by August seventeenth. So, I'm asking you now if you'd like to join up."

"Oh of course Ryau, I'll join you." Naki said taking a sip of wine imported from Joyous Exultation.

"Great, I've got the rest of my team. Now I just need to go explain it to their parents."

Their food arrived and they began to eat the two orders of Zupp

Chau'Nia. Ryau had a few glasses of wine but remained sober, his body had gotten used to the strength of Sangheili alcohol. "Well Ryau, we haven't been 'home' for quite awhile. I say we go back tonight after I pack," Naki said.

"Sounds like a plan, my stuff is in the back."

"Good." Naki finished up what she could eat and turned it over to Ryau, who ate it without question. Ryau popped out his data-pad and ejected his credit card and handed it to the waitress that came with the bill.

A week later Ryau drove to the address that the ZSMA had provided for Endesa and Asau, it was a ferry dock. He nodded to the attendant and showed him his credentials and orders to pick up Endesa and Asau. The gate rolled up and he pulled on to the small barge.

"Well this is going to be interesting, we're going to see the largest farm on this side of the Kama Mountains." Naki sounded truly interested.

"Yes, well I've seen enough of farms. When I was Human, I always fought on farm worlds." Ryau remembered all the battles he had experienced years ago.

"Oh well."

The trip across the water was relatively shortm they disembarked and drove to a pair of houses on a cliff. A sign standing along the roadway proudly proclaimed _"Welcome to Nelume-Asaos Farms."_ Ryau parked next to a small Shadow Loader. They both got out and approached the front door. Before her could knock the door opened to reveal a fairly tall male Sangheili.

"Ah, you're my daughters Trainer." the man said.

"Well, Ex-trainer, sir. Are you Zemo or Venro?" Ryau asked.

"I am Venro 'Asaos." Venro said. "You're here to pick up Asau correct?"

"Yes sir," Ryau responded.

"Very well, Zemo is coming over with Endesa very soon. Is there anything you would like?"

"No I am fine, thank you."

Venro turned to Naki. "What about you miss?"

"Um, I'm good," Naki said.

A cheerfull voice came from the kitchen area. "I hear a familiar voice!" A female Sangheili dressed in work clothes came out of the doorway. She glanced at Naki once and stared. "N..naki? Is that you?"

"Kalo, gods it has been so long. Yes its me," Naki said.

"You look like you never aged past graduation from the Science

Academy."

"Well...Its a long story, but to make it short, Ryau and I are physically..." She paused and muttered, "and mentally, eighteen."

"How is that possible?" Kalo was very confused.

"Let's just say there was an accident with a Forerunner device."

"Oh, that would do it..."

Right then Endesa and her parents showed up in the room. "Major," Endesa nodded as she threw her pack further up her shoulder. Asau came down shorty and talked to Endesa while Ryau informed the fathers on what he knew of the mission, leaving out a few details on himself and Naki chatted with Kalo and Ser'a, Endesa and Asau's mothers, about scientific advancements and catching up on old times. Later Ryau carried out Asau and Endesa's gear bags out of courtesy and put them into the bed of the truck. The girls said fair well to their parents and they all took the ferry off the island.

>Ryau drove to Vekat and passed an old statue of a female in ancient combat armor. Shan's home was directly across from the statue's weapon. When they pulled up Shan threw his bag in the back and got in with Endesa and Asau. Lastly they went to a small military warehouse at the Varo-Cleavete Spaceport. Ryau pulled into the warehouse and locked up his truck after everyone got out. Naki took them inside and told them what they were doing there.<p>

"Alright, we're going to field test the Varo-class Combat Harness," Naki said. "So lets get set up. Endesa you're first." Naki took her to a back room and handed her a body suit. "Put this on."

Endesa held it up to her. "I think it may be a little big ma'am."

"It will fit, trust me, new tech. And call me Naki, Ryau runs a squad on a first name basis."

"Oh alright Ma- Naki. Endesa walked in to a small changing room and suited up. At first the body suit was much too large, but then it seemed to warm and it shrunk to fit her perfectly well. She came out and Naki had her step into a scanner. The machine activated and scanned Endesa's body dimensions. Endesa stepped out and a few moments later another machine opened up to reveal a set of the Varo-class formed for Endesa's body. Naki handed her a data pad with many different emblem variations.

"Choose one of those and a color," Naki said. Endesa looked it over and decided on a red hexagonal pattern. Naki entered the design into a computer terminal and shut the door on the machine. When she opened it the armor was a standard SpecOps Minor black chest piece rimed in a dark blue. Naki turned the chest piece around to show Endesa the red pattern painted clearly on the back, her name was written on the front left breast plate. "Now try it on and once you're done place the armor into a case maked with your name," Naki told her.

"It looks nice," Endesa thought as she followed orders. The armor fit perfectly and Endesa looked it over in the mirror in the changing

room. Then she giggled, _"I look nice in it."_

She packed it up like Naki said and put her clothes back on. Naki told her to send in Asau and she did. An hour later they were ready to go, everyone had the new armor they were testing and Ryau took them over to the main part of the space port. Ryau looked down at the boarding passes he was given and guided his team to the ship designated_ X-ray 2525_.

They were on the gangway when Endesa said, "Hmm, I thought we'd be taking one of our own ships."

"Well, we're such a small party, there was no reason in waisting the fuel to fly us there," Ryau told her.

"Oh... What are we going to do when we get there Ryau?" She said.

"According to our orders, we are going to be given leave passes for a few days and stuck in temporary accommodations until the mission is ready to leave." Ryau guided them to their group bunk room and set the armor boxes in the storage locker.

The Passenger liner shortly took off and left Sanghelios orbit, jumping towards Earth.

****AU-****

Well here's the beginning of Act II hope you enjoy. Read and Review please!

News related to the first LORC, Sgtlegendkiller is about to finish work on the first book Fate Twister, which mean that I can finally get to rewriting the Original Yay!

6. Act II Pt 2 Explosives?

(Read and review please)

****_The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act II Part 2**

>*****

****_Explosives?_****

****August 2, 2555 (human calendar) 1834 hours**
>****X-RAY 2525, Slip-space enroute to Earth**

>****SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [ACTIVE]**

>

* * *

><p>Endesa and Asau took the two bunks across from the door and Naki and Shan took the other pair of bunks across from the others. Ryau set his pack down on his lone bed in a separate room. It may be a civilian ship but the bunkrooms are still structured the same as military ships. Ryau walked back into the main room, sat in a chair, and relaxed.<p>

"So there is an option for cryo on this ship, if you would like to take that, that would be fine," Ryau said.

Endesa glanced around at the others, as did Asau and Shan. Naki just shrugged and went back to doodling on her data-pad.

"Ok... well I'll take that as a no." Ryau picked up his own data-pad and started to read a chapter of a human book called Universal Destruction.

A few hours later Asau and Shan had gone to the recreation area and were using the weight equipment that was available. It took them a while to figure out how to use some of the machines but eventually Asau jogged on the treadmill and Shan was easily lifting around 150 pounds in free weights. Endesa had found the pool and was lounging around in the twelve-foot zone just sitting underwater for periods of ten minutes holding her breath. The Human passengers initially avoided the Sangheili but eventually they started to use the ships facilities while the Sangheili were too.

About two days into the voyage, Ryau and Naki went to dinner at one of the restaurants. All of the tables around them remained empty while the other filled quickly, but after Ryau went up to the stage and sang some recent human song for karaoke the tables next to, them filled up with young couples wanting to chat. Ryau and Naki laughed and held some conversation, but then they finished their dinner and headed to their separate beds.

By the time the ship had arrived at Earth, Ryau had finished the book, Naki had made some improvements to the armor and Endesa, Asau and Shan had attempted to master the human board game Risk.

Endesa and Shan lifted the armor crates on to a cart and Asau cleaned up the mess that was once the board game. Naki grabbed her pack and followed Ryau out of the room. They rolled the gear up a few decks and crossed the umbilical into the Orbital Station. The other passengers just glided past them headed for the shuttles, but Ryau lead his group to the Customs office thanks to the pained arrows on the deck. They got plenty of stares from the other humans and crew on the station, Sangheili were not a normal occurrence on human stations let alone Earth. When they got to the Customs office, they were greeted by two Customs Agents.

"What's in the boxes huh?" one said rather asshole like.
"Explosives?"

"It is just armor and checked weapons sir," Ryau said. "Everything inside is on that sticker."

"Of course it is," the Asshole said, "let's open it up." The two Customs agents knelt over the armor boxes and tapped a pad on the front. A small holo pad appeared and the Asshole pressed a small grayed out open button. Another window appeared over the control screen followed by a 'failure' tone.

"You need to input a password, allow me." Ryau stepped forward.

"No, Split-jaw you will set it off." The Asshole said.

"Fine, fine," Ryau backed away, hands up in defense. "The password is... well you can't read my language."

"April- Get the crowbar."

"Yes, sir," the other agent said as she ran out.

Ryau leaned against a wall and sighed, waiting for the Customs Agent to return. The Asshole had gone into the security office and started to file an incident report before he even found anything. Suddenly he straightened up and saluted as an ONI officer entered the room and seemed rather angry.

"Major. Why haven't these Sangheili arrived at my Pelican yet?" The ONI officer sternly said.

"Sir, we have reason to believe these Split-I mean Elites are carrying explosives, and

they admitted to having weapons inside."

"Of course they did Major! Did you not receive my memo, or see the Hazard and ONI seal on the side of the box?"

"Y-yes sir..." He looked down and sighed," but they were acting suspicious."

"Oh? You tell me what suspicious looks like. If I recall correctly you have stopped every Elite that has stepped foot on this station, but you let an insurgents through with four kilos of C12 through that was so jumpy that he was picked up by the surface security- Even the ARGUS snifters had him, but you let him through." The officer paused and typed something into a computer terminal. "Major you are here by discharged of your duties for the time being. Get out of here."

The asshole Customs agent quietly left the room without saying a word. The other Agent returned carrying a toolbox. "Umm...I'll just be in the office." She quickly shuffled into the office and closed the door.

"Sorry about that Major," the ONI officer said sticking his hand out for a handshake.

"I'm Colonel Hartford."

Ryau nodded and shook the hand. "I expected something along the lines of that to happen."

"I'm sure if they knew of your _SPARTAN_ history they would be less judgmental."

"No, Colonel. I think it would make it worse. Sympathize with the enemy was never much accepted in any Human war."

"Very well Major," he turned to Naki. "Ma'am my research department would like to inform you that the front half of the Covenant _Mercy and Betrayal_ sank off the coast of Oregon."

"Oh really? Is it possible if we can dive the wreck? There are some personal effects I would like to retrieve," Naki said.

"I'll see what I can do," he looked at his watch and turned to the doorway. "We need to get going, the Pelican is not going to wait forever."

"Of course Colonel," Ryau said as they followed him to the hangar and boarded the waiting Pelican. They secured their harnesses and the Pilot secured the rear hatch then took off. The Pelican rumbled and shuttered on its reentry into the atmosphere but eventually smoothed out as it exited the cloud layer over the ocean. The outline of the front half of the Mercy and Betrayal could clearly be seen underwater, even on one of the fins had survived the initial explosion and reentry and was sticking up out of the water. Ryau could see an old oilrig type structure set up next to it, obviously an ONI field research station.

"We've managed to bring it closer to shore and we have recovered a significant amount of your research data on Project Leau." The Colonel said glancing out the small portholes.

Naki frowned, "Oh... I hope you do not look down on me for what I have done."

"Ma'am, no offense, but if I do not look down on Ryau for what he has done- then I sure as hell would not look down on you. Besides from your records we could see you took steps exceeding what we had expected for treatment of a human prisoner."

"Heh thanks. I wonder if he knows what happened to the others." Ryau mumbled quietly receiving a sharp glare from Naki that said 'Don't you dare bring that up.'

"Anyway Major, after analyzing what is left of the Covenant command-net, We found that the ship assigned to glassing Standard never reported back, and the Frigates that HIGHCOM sent were recalled when Reach came under attack."

"So there may be Humans still alive there?" Ryau's thoughts immediately went back to his SPARTAN team he had left behind there. "Why not send a Prowler first?"

"We did, it returned reporting that it had received multiple low power broadcasts on the UNSC E-band but they were strong enough to make out what they were saying. They also identified a Covenant camp on the planet, by a down Assault Carrier."

"Alright, I presume that you want my team so we can break it to them the war is over?"

"Exactly, and going off the numbers that we received when they requested the frigates, three years ago there could be at most 2400 civilians left alive," the Colonel said as he made a hand signal to the pilot.

"So that is the mission, understood."

Eventually the Pelican flew over the Puget Sound and arrived in the airspace of the old SeaTac Airport. Over the years it had expanded, to include space faring ships but now it's landing platforms and runways were cratered and cracked from the war. "Sorry about the

state of the airport, he hasn't finished SeaTac yet." The Pelican turned and landed on a pad by a terminal. The back hatch opened and some mechanics moved a fuel truck onto position. Colonel Hartford stepped out and signed a piece of paper and a data-pad. "Here are your leave passes and visas. The ship departs here August 17 and you four need to be there before noon." He handed them all plastic cards with their names on them. "There is a currency exchange in the terminal and I'll see you when the

mission begins."

"Thank you Colonel, we will be there." Ryau said as they walked to the train terminal. Naki exchanged some of their spare Sanghelian credits for some human currency and they took an express train to Seattle. The train was mostly empty; a few humans sat on the sides not paying attention to the Sangheili.

Ryau's group sat in the middle looking at all the destruction the Great War had caused. Here and there in the Industrial districts, large craters postmarked the lightly used roads and the occasional building was toppled over into an ally. However, as they got closer into the city and entered SoDo it became less frequent but more violent. Entire buildings were missing walls, there looked to be extensive fire and bullet damage and some buildings were missing completely. The train slowed and passed under what looked to be the ring of an orbital space tether. Endesa, Shan and Asau looked up in awe. It had been three years, but that is never enough for one devastated city. The entire world looked like that, reconstruction will take decades. The train remained moving at the slow pace and entered a tunnel just before leaving SoDo. It went through the dark for about 15 minutes until it exited into an underground station. The station at one time was at once time artistically designed, but now it was torn up with old signs of battle everywhere. Some cleanup crews on a nearly platform were busy cleaning the rubble from a much older train car. The train doors pinged open while the intercom announced the Seattle Waterfront.

"Come on, let's look for a hotel around here." Ryau said wondering if any of the hotels in his time still operated.

They walked down Alaska Way by the waterfront, and most of the Humans they passed either scowled or turned away. The group passed a few hotels but they were expensive and all the receptionists looked at Ryau like they were going to kill him. Naki glanced over to a construction site and noticed some young Sangheili lifting some platforms. One noticed the Naki and Ryau passing by and set the platform down. "Zaka, fellow Sangheili." The two walked over to the sidewalk. "How do you do, Brothers and Sisters?"

"We a doing fine Brothers, thank you for asking. Tell me, do you know of a Sangheili friendly hotel nearby?" Naki asked politely.

"Oh yes Sister, there is one head to Pike Place, there is a nice hotel there, but if I may ask, what is a group like yourselves doing here?" He asked.

"Military business Brother, with the humans," Ryau said.

"Ah, I see, well goodbye Brothers and Sisters." The two went back to working on the building and the group went on.

Eventually they came to the _Pike Place Inn_ on the corner of the market, a small sign on the window stated _Sangheili Welcome_ in Sangheilian. They walked inside and was greeted by a friendly woman behind a desk.

7. Act II Pt 3 Return to Standard IV

**August 16, 2555 1102 hour
>Off the Oregon coast
45.63325 N 124.71130 W
>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [ACTIVE]
**

* * *

><p>The past few days consisted of exploring the fairly undamaged waterfront, avoiding angry humans and eating at the few restaurants that allowed Sangheili. However, today Ryau and Naki left Asau, Endesa and Shan at the hotel and went out to the wreck of the Mercy and Betrayal with approval from Colonel Hartford. Ryau popped the seal on the armor cases and set the lids apart. Naki took her armor out and started to suit up, Ryau did the same.

"Well, now's a good time to test out the re-breather," Naki said.

"What, you haven't tested this gear yet?" Ryau stopped right before he clicked the re-breather into place.

"Oh, it's perfectly safe, lab tested up to five thousand 'meters'. But we're field testing it remember?"

"Alright, alright." Ryau clicked it in, put his hands up defensively, and chuckled.

"Well then, let's go." Naki jumped into the water and Ryau followed promptly. They sank down to the sea floor and the armor held together. _"Okay, let's get to the exposed decks,"_ Naki radioed. They walked across the sea floor toward the rear half of the front and arrived at the jumbled mess that was a lower deck. Naki and Ryau activated their low-light vision and a bunch of fish swam out of a doorway. The emergency chemical lighting still burned dully and illuminated the floor above them. _"Hmm, I think my room was up this way."_ Naki said heading for a doorway.

They pried a set of sealed emergency doors at a junction and Ryau checked other side. _"Hey, Naki. There's still pressure on the other side of the door."_

"What? Wow, try and shut the door we came through." Naki said. Ryau pried the doors back into place and created the best seal he could. Naki entered a pass code and the undamaged door slowly opened. The water in the emergency junction rushed out into the corridor beyond carrying Ryau and Naki with it.

Ryau hasty stood back up and checked the air quality with his data-pad. "Air's dead. Its all CO2, if anyone survived the crash they suffocated."

"I guess we're not taking these off then, we have four hours of air."

Naki tapped her re-breather. "Follow me, my room is just up this way." They continued through the upside down corridor in two feet of water, there were leaks all over and the ship creaked from the external water pressure. They under a grav lift hatch that was still operating and it opened, a water-swollen body fell out and splashed right beside Naki. She jumped, yelped and grabbed onto Ryau. "Gods that scared me," she said releasing Ryau.

"Poor kid, must have been coming up the lift when the power cut out and the ship crashed." Ryau said looking over the body. He found an ID card in the Minors Data pad. "This was Minor Usea 'Maramasee, first deployment. Well Usea I hope your end was quick." Ryau patted the armor and picked up his helmet. "Hmm, standard issue from the Harvest campaign, I'm guessing it was passed from father to son." He tucked Usea's helmet and a folded piece of laminate paper from the corpse into his bag to return to the Minor's family. Finally they came to Naki's room, but the door was jammed and off its rails. Ryau sighed and activated his wrist blade. He cut a rough rectangle in the door plate and kicked at it till it fell away. "Okay, get what you need and lets get out of this ship." Ryau said stepping into the room.

A blinking light under the water alerted Ryau to a corner. He sloshed over there and picked up the flashing light. It was the holographic picture of Naki and him at a bar after he had successfully completed the rank up training. Ryau chuckled, "Ha! Naki look at this," he tossed her the picture emitter.

"Wow, I had forgotten about this photo." Naki looked back to Ryau. "That was a fun evening wasn't it?"

"Yes it was." He paused as listening to something, "we must get going. This portion of the ship seems unstable." As if right on cue, the hull creaked and something snapped somewhere. "Did you hear that?"

"Yes Ryau I hear it, but I need to grab my data storage device under my desk... Which is attached to the ceiling now in the next room."

"Fine, fine where is it?" Ryau walked into a back room and spied the desk bolted to the roof. "Never mind, I see it." He jumped up and grabbed onto the desk then he pulled himself up and released the storage unit from the main system. After dropping down back into the water, he handed Naki the storage unit. "Here you go, now can we leave?"

"Of Course." Naki put the data core into her waterproof bag and headed back into the hall once again. They waded through the now waist high water to the door and shut the pressure doors behind them. The room filled with water and Ryau pried the damaged doors apart.

They rose at a controlled decent to avoid causing air bubbles in their bloodstream and broke the surface minutes after leaving the ships debris field. Ryau hopped onto the floating dock beside the ONI research rig and helped Naki up beside him.

"Yup, gear works just fine," Ryau chuckled after removing the re-breather. Then he suddenly removed his armor and stripped down to

his underclothes. Naki stared at him with a look of confusion and he jumped back into the Pacific. He resurfaced a moment later. "Damn! I forgot how cold this was." Ryau swam around the dock a bit before getting out again.

"How'd it feel?" Naki said with a laugh.

"Cold, but it felt cold to be home again. Well as close to home as we can get."

"What has it been thirty years since we last saw Seattle?" Naki quietly said looking at her hands.

"Something like that, but that's the past now, we've found a future that we're actually good at. Who'd a thought, I'd be a soldier and you'd be a scientist. Sure, we were sort of thrust into them but we've made it this far."

"True, true." Naki smiled. "We have our future together."

There was a buzz of vibration from Ryau's armor case. He picked up his data-pad and checked the message that had just been left. It was from Colonel Hartford, "Major, ONI sent another prowler to Standard last week, and the only response we received was a quick burst of information. That's usually triggered when the craft has been extensively damaged or destroyed. My higher ups fear the worst, and they've bumped your mission up to today. The Venice refit fell behind so they're sending you on the Tahoma, it's a new ship that just came out of the factory a month ago but its all set up and ready. The Venice's crew has already been transferred and a Pelican's waiting on the pad, get here as quick as you can." Ryau stuck the data-pad in his pocket and started to quickly pack his armor back into its case.

"Ryau, what's wrong?" Naki asked taking the clue and packing up as well.

"They've bumped our mission up to today, we got to go." Ryau shut the lid on the armor and waved for the Pelican on the Rig's pad to start up. The Pelican's engines whined as it lifted off the pad moments later and headed back for Seattle. An hour later, the Pelican landed on the old Colman Dock at the Ferry Terminal. Shan, Endesa and Asau met them there and loaded up their own armor cases and supplies.

"What's this about a ship disappearing?" Auva asked.

"ONI says a prowler sent a data packet usually sent before the damage is too heavy." Ryau answered.

"Oh... Well that's not good," Endesa chimed in.

"No, no it is not."

The Pelican flew over SeaTac and right into the starboard hangar of the UNSC Tahoma as the ship itself was lifting off. Colonel Hartford met them as the Pelican's hatch opened. "Sorry about the quick pick up. Follow me, I'll take you to your squad lounge and introduce you to the other members of your team."

They loaded their gear onto a cart and pushed it through the halls. "Other members? I wasn't told that this was a joint team as well," Ryau asked concerned.

"They volunteered for the position of working with members of the Sangheili. So I don't think you need to worry about how they'd treat you as a commanding officer." Hartford said keying a door. It opened into a spacious room with some benches, sort of, like a cafeteria and armory mixed. Three humans sat around a table.

The one wearing ODST armor saw Hartford and Ryau; he stood up and saluted, "Major, Colonel." The other two quickly did the same.

"At ease. Major, this is Staff Sergeant Foss, he said he owed you a favor," Hartford raised an eyebrow.

"Major Cinotee pulled me from the wreckage of a Longsword on the Ark, sir." Foss said.

"Ah, I see. This is Corporal Cannon; she's on loan from the Forerunner dig sites that you no doubt came across in the battle of Reach. And lastly Corporal Dosh, and is a very good sniper."

"Very well. Alright, this is Minor Endesa 'Nelum, Minor Asau 'Asaos and Shan 'Vekatom. They've been trained in basic Special Operations. This," He motioned to Naki. "Is SpecOps Science Major Naki 'Cimutee, she is one of the few surviving holders of that rank and is an expert at Forerunner tech."

"Glad to meet you all," Foss said nodding and sitting back into his seat.

A Technician entered the room and glanced at Ryau and his fellow Sangheili. "Once we jump into slipspace, everyone is going into Cryo until the ship drops out. Standard procedure for all non essential personnel, so if you all will follow me." He turned and went back out the door. Ryau glanced around at the group still in the room and then followed the Technician. The others followed swiftly down the hall.

The Cryo Bay was on the lower levels of the ship; down a lift and through some corridors they came to the large hangar like room. Ryau looked over the Cryo pods, they had a new design to them and were more vertical to take up even less space. "Okay, are you sure the pods are calibrated to our physiology?" Naki asked the Technician.

"We've spent much time working with other Sangheili on proper calibrations, almost all pods in the human fleet have the proper protocols in place to give Sangheili sufficient nutritional supplement." He turned and motioned to a room labeled Bio-Lab. "I'm sorry to have to place you in there but it is the only place where you will receive as much privacy as possible, as you need to strip down to avoid injury."

"Uh, very well," Naki said while walking through the doors. The others followed and left the Technician and Colonel Hartford in the main cryo bay. Ryau and Shan placed the armor cases on the tables and secured the rest of their gear. They stripped down and got into the cryo pods. Naki pressed the activate button and hopped into her own

pod.

"Well here we go," Ryau's pod shut and sealed.

**September 2, 2555 0432 hour
>Standard IV
UNSC Tahoma Cryogenics bay B, Bio-Lab
>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [ACTIVE]
**

* * *

><p>Ryau slowly came to as the emergency wake-up drugs took effect. He was lying on his back when the pod's door opened. Out side, his pod lights flicked and sparks flashed across the room. He swallowed the nutritional supplement and muttered, "What the hell...?" He sat up and grabbed his body suit he had placed in the receptacle on his pod. After suiting up, he climbed out of the pod. Above him, Endesa's pod hissed open.<p>

"Wha-ahhhhh!" She vomited up the nutritional supplement while she fell and screamed. Ryau moved under her and caught her before she landed on Naki's pod. She coughed up anything that was left took some deep breaths. He set her down on his pod's gel layer and looked to Naki's pod. The words _Emergency De-Frost flashed on the small keypad. Moments later her cover opened and she sat up.

"What happened?" She asked looking about the sideways room.

"Absolutely no idea." Ryau replied. He moved under Asau's pod as it opened and he caught her. Gulping down the nutritional supplement, Asau thanked Ryau for catching her. On the other side of Naki's pod, Shan's opened. "Everyone find your armor and suit up. I pretty sure that this wasn't supposed to happen." The ripped open the lids to the armor cases and suited up in the advanced armor. Endesa dropped her re-breather and it bounced across the floor and fell through the open doorway.

"Damnâ€¦ I'm not getting that back am I," she said looking to the door.

Ryau climbed over his cryo pod and looked down the doorway. The main cryo bay was torn open. He could see soil where the opposite wall should be. "Holy hellâ€¦ no Endesa you're not."

"What? What do you see?" Naki asked.

"The entire opposite wall is gone, there's just dirt there now."

"Oh myâ€¦"

"Oh my is right," He switched to his radio. _"Anyone receiving? This is SpecOps Major Ryau Cinotee, please respond."_All he got was static in return. After trying a few more times he finally gave up. "Well, time to leave."

Ryau inched down the near vertical floor down to the dirt. Steam and smoke rose out of the hole in the side, making the non-slip floor very moist and almost blinding them. The rest of the group followed and they reached a divider that acted well as a ledge. Stepping across that, the divider creaked and bent slightly. "Okay, easy,

easy," Ryau said moving to a doorway. From the doorway, the general quarters alarm still sounded and the flashing red and yellow lights illuminated pieces of debris and walls. Once in the hallway and out of the onslaught of steam and smoke, Endesa coughed and quickly moved down the corridor to the nearest hangar bay following the signs painted on the floor.

A terrible smell filled the air as Ryau and Naki ducked under exposed supports and broken deck plates. Surprisingly the corridors were empty of bodies or equipment. It gave the impression that everyone had been expecting the crash and had abandoned ship in enough time or had made it to their action stations and there were bodies elsewhere. They came to a junction that had collapsed from the floor above, there was blood splattered around a beam that had pierced the wall but there was not a body in sight. Suddenly a harsh screech shot through the corridors over the ongoing alarm.

"No... It can't be," Naki whispered.

Ryau stared down the dark hallway it had come from "Oh shit..."

* * *

><p>AU:<p>

Here we go, sorry for the missed update in December and the abrupt ending of this. Anyway new rewrite chapter coming this weekend I hope

8. Act II Pt 4 Welcome Brother

_****_The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act II Part
4_****_

**Welcome Brother**

**September 2, 2555 0458 hour

>Standard IV
UNSC **_**Tahoma**_** Service Corridor 17B

>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [ACTIVE]
**

* * *

><p>"What was that?" Endesa stared down the dark corridor the sound had come from.<p>

"No time to explain," Ryau said backing toward the other corridor. "Run!" The group broke into a sprint down to the hangar deck. Ryau slapped a sign on the wall as they passed a junction. "Armory ahead, we need weapons. Grab what you can."

The armory's door was jammed open and weapons were scattered all over the room from the crash. They got inside and spread against the wall out of sight, loud thumps of the running creature ran by. Once it was all clear, Ryau collected Shotguns and distributed them to the group. Naki collected ammunition however she only could find enough 8 Gauge cartridges for only everyone to have one full clip. "Hmm, seems like someone already raided this armory." Naki said picking up an MA5C for herself.

"I wouldn't be surprised, considering the Flood. I'd take all the ammo that we could if I was in command. But right now all we need to do is get out of this ship."

"No wait, we should go to the bridge." Naki brought a map of the ship up on a working computer and traced a path with her finger. "We can access the communications and see if we can find one of the radio broadcast transmission sites that alerted us of this place nearby." She downloaded the map onto her data-pad. "And if there are any survivors we can contact them through the bridge radio, yours might have been damaged in the crash." Naki suggested.

"Good point, lets get going." Ryau leaned out the armory door and looked down the tilted corridor. "All clear"

"Alright the map says that there's an access corridor that will take us up to the bridge level just down there." Naki pointed down the corridor in the direction opposite the Flood sound. "It's labeled _Starboard Access 12b_. So keep your eyes open."

They moved out of the armor quickly, there was no need for silence since the Flood rely on scent. The ongoing alarms and flashing lights made it difficult to see and hear if the Flood was following. A Combat form jumped out from a storage room in front of Endesa, She hesitated for a moment, it was her first encounter with the Flood. It stood there for a moment before being blown away by her shotgun. Two more dropped down from a hole in front of the group. Naki pulled the trigger of her MA5 and tore through the chest cavity of the Combat form. The Infection form inside popped, and her bullets went out the back to cut the other Flood form in half. For now, nothing else moved.

"Good shooting." Ryau complemented Naki and Endesa. They reloaded their weapons and continued through the ship. There were no more Flood encounters on their path to the bridge, and by the time they had arrived the sun had risen over the mountains. The Bridge doors opened and attempted to close before jamming halfway through with a loud Clunk. Computers were smashed and chairs were strewn about. Sparks from broken wires danced across the floor. "Well, this looks bad," Ryau said.

"Yeah... Humans put their command bridges on the front of their ships where it is more likely to take the full force of an impact. Not even their sea going ships were designed like that." Naki looked over the destruction hoping to find a working computer.

"Endesa, Asau, see if you can find something to block the doorway. We don't need anything sneaking up on us at the moment," Ryau ordered. They nodded and ran off into the corridor. "And Shan, tap some of the keyboards and see if anything responds."

"Yes sir," Shan said. He walked around the bridge and taped the computers while Ryau and Naki cleaned up an area near a cable junction.

Naki looked up out the broken bridge windows at the sun coming over the mountains. "You know, if it wasn't for the looming threat of danger and the fact we're stranded on a planet with a Flood infestation... This would look pretty beautiful."

"Eh, I think Sanghelios still looks better." Ryau said pulling the grate off of the junction.

"True, true." Naki tossed an glow-stick down the hole.

"Ryau!" Shan said. "I've got a response."

"Very good, Naki work your magic," he patted her back.

"Gladly." Naki moved over in front of the computer and bypassed security after ten minutes of working. She finally managed to open an emergency communications system and activated a comm channel.

_"...au Cinotee, this... Hartford, we received your message... awaiting your response. The Flood has... the ship and we advise you to evac the ship via bridge. Radio when you reach the bridge and a Pelican will pick you up..."_The message continued to repeat and Naki looked to Ryau.

"Colonel Hartford we are on the bridge and would very much like evac sir. My radio's receiver is damaged and am using the ships communications for receiving." Ryau radioed Hartford.

The reply came almost right away. _"Good, we don't wa... Loyalists that shot us down to know... made it, stay using shortwave. A Pelican is on the way. ETA fifteen minutes, hold tight."_Normal radio traffic started to play again as Naki flipped through the channels.

Asau and Endesa returned carrying a barricade. "This is all we could find," Asau said. They placed it in the doorway and blocked the passage.

"Good job, we've got pick-up on the way. Be ready in fifteen." Ryau said looking over the barricade.

The fifteen minutes passed slowly, two more small Flood assaults and their lack of ammo kept them on edge. Ryau paced in front of the barricade watching for any sign of the enemy. Shan monitored the ships partially running radar for the Pelican. Upon looking out into the forest and beyond it became clear that the Flood infestation was minimal or almost non-existent. The Comm system suddenly beeped. Naki turned away from the world and opened the channel, a shortwave transmission began to play.

_"Major, we've detected a Phantom inbound to the crash site. It will reach the ship before us, so I have called the Pelican back. We simply cannot risk detection at this time. I have devised a new mission for your Sangheili team. Recover your weapons in Armory 4B just off the bridge. I want you to meet the Phantom and claim that you were part of a boarding party that assaulted the ship before we jumped to this system. Once you gained their trust, attempt to inform them of the result of the war. I hope we'll be able to make contact again soon. Good luck, over and out." _

Ryau and his team sat around and pondered the message. "This sounds like it might work," Shan said.

"Might have some holes," Naki added.

"Well lets do it. To the armory." Ryau said picking up his shotgun. Asau and Endesa pushed the barricade out of the doorway then they rushed out. "Keep up the speed, we need to get to the armory as fast as possible."

The path to the armory was clear most of the route except for a collapsed structural support. Ryau vaulted over the beam and fired a shell into a Combat form that jumped out of a hallway. Flood forms started to rush from any opening. Ryau and his team were forced to slow down and fire their weapons into the mass. Naki's MA5 fired away at the many Flood forms, cutting them to pieces.

Endesa was met with a click as she pulled the trigger. "I'm out!" she shouted before throwing the gun away and activating the wrist blades on her armor. Soon everyone else was doing the same, cutting through the flood of Flood.

When they reached the armory the plasma in their blades was running dangerously low, but luckily the armory's door was still working. Ryau keyed it open and they ran inside, he shut it just in time to stop a Carrier form from getting in. A muffled boom shook the door a moment later.

"Okay," Naki looked around the armory and found the purple weapons crate. "There we go," she mumbled to herself. She keyed in her pass code and the lid popped off with a hiss. Endesa took a Plasma rifle and a Plasma pistol. Asau a Fuel Rod gun and Plasma rifle. Shan a Needle rifle and a Spiker. While Ryau took his personal Carbine and Energy sword, along with a Needler just in case. Naki grabbed a Carbine and Needler as well.

"Hey Endesa," Ryau pulled an extra re-breather out of the equipment box and tossed it to her.

"Oh thanks," she clicked it into place.

Naki checked her data-pad which she had synced up to the ships radar system. "Ryau, the Phantom is docking in Hangar 1B directly bellow us."

"Alright, lets get down there." Ryau slowly opened the door and peeked out. Flood flesh was plastered against the wall, but the Infection forms were nowhere to be found. "Clear, lets move."

They crept out of the armory into the corridor and headed down, checking open passages and rooms as they went. Suddenly there was an explosion from down bellow as the Phantom's passengers blew their way in to the ship. A Flood screech responded to the explosion. Dull thumps echoed through the ship as the remaining Flood forms ran for the hangar.

"Gods! How much of the crew didn't make it." Ryau yelled as they dashed for the hangar as well.

Behind them a new mob of Flood appeared in the corridor. Ryau fired a few rounds with his Carbine at the mob, Endesa fired her Plasma rifle and set fire to the rotten flesh. They came to a corner and Ryau and Endesa stopped and covered Naki, Asau and Shan. Once they got by, Asau turned and shot her Fuel Rod into the mob, easily vaporizing most of the remaining Flood.

"Brothers, Sisters!" Ryau heard someone yell. He stood up and glanced over at the Hangar door. Two fellow Sangheili and a Jiralhanae stood around a Plasma Turret. The one that had called them was an Ultra.

"Ultra! Gods it is good to see you. We need to get off this ship right away!" Ryau said.

"Why Brother? What is aboard this ship that has you so worried." The Ultra chuckled.

"The Flood has infested the ship!" Just at that moment a Carrier form rounded the corner and exploded.

"By the Gods, I thought we burned them away." He turned to the others. "Back to the Phantom, now!" The Ultra's troops turned around and ran back through the still smoking doorway. Ryau and the others followed closely behind. The remaining mob rounded the corner but was denied access to the hangar by a large shipping crate. "What are your ranks and how did you get here?"

"I am SpecOps Major Ryau Cinotee, this is Science Major Naki Cimutee, and Minor Domos Endesa Nelum, Asau Asaos and Shan Vekat. We boarded the ship during orbital combat just before it jumped here. We were making our way from engineering to the ships command bridge when the ship was shot down and crashed. " Ryau explained.

"Hmm, come. I will take you to our keep. You'll get some food and maybe a place to live. But know this no one will come for you here. We doubt that the Holy Covenant knows that we still live." The boarded the Phantom and it quickly pulled away.

"That's a strange set of armor you have there Sangheili," the Jiralhanae said. "What kind is it."

"Its experimental, manufactured at Arica Armories in Zelso. Designed by Science Major Cimutee here." Ryau said. The Jiralhanae just gave a disapproving grunt in return. Ryau walked over to the open doorway to the troop bay and sat down on the edge. Here and there he saw glimpses of road bellow in the forest, it was the highway he had last escorted the Evac convoy. _"Hmm I wonder if they ever made it to the starport,"_ he thought. Soon the Phantom passed over a good sized Human city, Tumble. _"Such an odd name for a city, but oh well, its deserted now."_ Ryau was surprised how fast the native vegetation had reclaimed vast amounts of the city. But then suddenly it was all gone, the Phantom had flown over the ocean.

A few hours passed and they arrived over the other continent. A massive CSO-class Supper Carrier sat, crashed landed in the center of what looked to be a Human city. But now it was overgrown and the area around it cleared into a mini city of Covenant design, the Human structures were cleared from the ship area and only existed on the outskirts now as reclaimed piles of rubble.

"Welcome to the Glorious Retribution." The Ultra said.

* * *

><p>AU-
Well heres part 4 of Act 2, and we're going to have

another major plot development coming soon.

9. Act II Pt 5 The Truth

****_The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act II Part 5_****

****_The Truth_****

****September 2, 2555 0713 hour**
>****Covenant camp at crashed CSO-Class Super Carrier**

****_**Glorious Retribution **_****

>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [ACTIVE]

* * *

><p>Ryau pulled himself up from the edge of the Phantom as it settled on a landing pad. The pad itself was surrounded by prefabricated structures that resembled houses. Ryau and his team stepped out of the Phantom behind the Ultra and the others. Ryau noticed a few females walking by with small children that had stopped to watch him and the others in their strange armor. The Ultra saw their looks and gestured to Ryau.<p>

"The females we have here were married to the warriors and the Shipmaster. They also had some children aboard. And once we realized we were trapped here the Shipmaster gave the authorization for warriors to have children with their families." The Ultra said.

"Ah, I see," Ryau said. "This is a nice place here."

"Yes, we finished construction four cycles ago. I expect you will enjoy your lives here." He said. They walked down an old cracked street, one of the few remaining human made things in there area. The Ultra lead them to a large structure. "This is the 'Keep' of our city, the Shipmaster is acting Kadion."

"Is it possible that I may speak with him now? There is some important information that should be delivered to someone of his status." Ryau said.

"Please wait here a moment." The Ultra ran a head into the Keep and came out a few moments later. "I'm sorry Major, but he is very 'busy' right now with personal matters. He'll be able to see you in a few days. Now let us continue our walk about the city."

"Hmm I guess it can wait. Yes of course."

The Ultra took them though the city pointing out important location. The current residents of the camp watched them, but near the end of the tour the Ultra pointed out the Sangheili District's Dinning hall. "The last meal of the day is in just a few cycle, so once we finish with the tour be there or you wont get food." Finally he showed them a small home like structure. "We had a marriage last week, so this house is open. Its small, but unless you want to live in the other species districts, this is as big as you're going to get."

"No this is fine for now," Ryau said.

"Very well Major, I will see you at dinner." With that the Ultra turned and left.

Endesa, Shan and Asau headed to another room to find three beds already set up. "Sweet," Endesa said. "We've got actual beds, not those shit ship bunks."

"Great- no more of that nutritional supplement either." Asau laughed.

Ryau and Naki walked into the main bedroom only to find a master bed and that was all. "Damn this always happen, is it really so obvious that we're together?" Ryau said with a chuckle.

Naki just laughed and sat down. "Well its alright, not as good as our bed on Sanghelios though. Besides, the Ultra said it was time to get dinner." She said.

"You're right, we should get going now." Ryau went back to the others and gathered their stuff, keeping their weapons on them just in case things didn't go the way they hoped. As they passed though the town Ryau noticed an armory. "Hey before anything happens lets get some ammo and gear."

"Okay, well lets hope that they don't suspect anything." Naki said. They entered the Armory and were greeted by the smell of hot plasma and molten metals. "Whew, I haven't smelled that since our tour of the Arica weapons factory. They have a whole set up here."

"Yeah seems so," Ryau said. A small female sat behind a counter and fiddled with a Sangheili helmet. She was attaching a visor over where the eyes would be, the helmet itself look very similar to the one Ryau was wearing now. He glanced over at a foundry and saw a fresh mold by the cooling chamber. He chuckled a bit and walked over. "Hello, mind if we resupply here?"

She jumped, she had not heard them come into the armory. "Oh, of course."

"That helmet looks familiar." Ryau chuckled.

"Um, yes. I saw you get of the Phantom and I liked the design. So... what can I get you?" She said.

Ryau set his weapons on the table. "We need a plasma recharge, some needles and some Carbine cartridges."

"Very well, this will take a moment." She set the weapons onto a cart and rolled them into another room. There were flashes of light as she refilled the plasma weapons.

Ryau walked over to a rack and pulled off some instant meals and saw some tactical pads. "Hey Naki, while we're here lets stock up on some tech supplies too."

"Oh okay, grab those data-pads, some of the system possessors and a radio repair kit for your helmet." Naki said.

"Good idea," Ryau scooped those items up and set them in the bag. He set the bag down by the counter and waited for the female to bring

the weapons out. She returned a few moments later and set them on the counter.

"Here we are, your weapons are charged up and ready to go. My name is Kala 'Velamn by the way."

"Nice to meet you Kala, if I may ask, do you have any more of that armor or have you just been making that helmet?"

"I um, I have the rest already made." She said.

"Very good," he chuckled. "Well thank you for the resupply Kala, goodbye." |

"Goodbye Major." Kala said.

Ryau and Naki left the armory and headed off to the Dinning hall. When they arrived they saw it was very crowded and that there were only a few tables left. Also they were still using old Covenant credits, something that Ryau nor most Sangheili used anymore. "Naki, do you still have your old card hooked up to your account?" Ryau asked.

"No, but I think I have a few old credit chips in my pack."

"Well that will have to do. Try not to spend over five credits Auva," Ryau said as they got in line. They ordered the Zupp Chau`Nia and headed over to the check stand.

When Ryau handed over the credit chips the cashier rejected them. "Free food to active warriors, Major." She said.

"Ah thank you miss." When they got out of earshot Ryau leaned to Naki. "We got off easy," he whispered.

"Yes we did." She let out a sigh and sat at an open table next to a group of females. Ryau sat next to her and overheard their conversation.

"Another patrol disappeared by the Forerunner structure again... Kamma was with them. One said.

"Kamma? What was she doing with them?"

"She snuck into the Spirit, let alone what was the patrol doing near the structure? They should know that the structure has claimed enough lives."

"Poor Morana, first her husband Zemo and now Kamma. What has she done to anger the Gods." They got silent and Ryau sipped his chowder. He looked up and saw the Ultra walk onto a stage. His image was projected onto large screens removed from the super carrier.

"Brothers, Sisters, other species of the Covenant. The Shipmaster is not here at the moment to deliver this news, but today we received news that the war with the Humans wages on..." The Ultra announced. "And I doubt that you have not heard about the Human ship that crashed thanks to our brothers in orbit manning the disabled Battle cruiser."

The Ultra continued to speak but Ryau leaned over to Naki. "Give me that data card with the info about the war on it. I want to put a stop to this before they have even less of a reason to believe me."

"Do you really think thats a good idea?" Naki asked.

"Yes, take the gear and wait by the door unless you think you need to stay by me when I talk."

"Very well," Naki handed him the data card and when with Auva to the door.

Ryau stood up and cleared his throat. "Excuse me, Ultra."

"Ah there is one of them now, SpecOps Major Ryau Cinotee as I recall. Yes what is it?"

He saw himself appear in the screens and he began his speech. "Well I wished to speak with the Shipmaster before this, but haven't been entirely truthful with the Ultra here." He paused for a moment. "Three years ago... The Humans discovered a Halo Installation." Ryau started the presentation that Naki had handed him. It was footage from a Marine's helmet camera after the landing of his life pod. There was murmuring amongst the room.

"And the Demon, as he was known to you, destroyed it when he learned of the Halo Array's true purpose." Ryau went on and explained what happened in the war. "After the Demon killed The Prophet of Regret, Truth used it to instigate the Changing of the Guard. Jiralhanae replaced the Sangheili as protectors of the Prophets. Later the Arbiter was sent on a mission to retrieve the Index from Installation zero-five's Library and Tartarus attempted to kill him saying that the Prophets ordered him to do it. That was when things started to decline. The Great Schism began and the Covenant fell into disarray... Truth ordered the Jiralhanae to murder the High Council and the Sangheili broke from the Covenant upon learning of the true purpose of the Halo's and the Jiralhanae betrayal." Footage from various space battles around High Charity and Delta Halo played on the screens. The crowd of Sangheili was in uproar and Ryau could hear what could be the Jiralhanae dinning hall from where he stood. But he continued with the Second Battle of Earth and The Battle of Installation 04. By the time he had finished reciting all he knew of the war, the entire room was silent.

"How did you learn of the Great Journey's falsehood?" Asked a voice to the left. Ryau turned towards the voice and saw a gold-clad Sangheili, the Shipmaster.

"The Oracles, analysis of the Forerunner Archives, actually viewing what the rings are capable of." Ryau said.

"Humph, it seems that you've given adequate evidence that the Covenant has fallen and the Sangheili were betrayed by the Jiralhanae and the High Prophets. And since you are the most experienced in this type of situation, what do you say we should do?"

"Don't do anything. If all is going fine let it be, don't start anything. The Jiralhanae have not been a problem correct?"

"We have a very small Jiralhanae population here, its quite rare that you would have our two species on the same ship."

Hmm, exactly. Don't start any thing, but I am only a Major," Ryau said.

"Very well," the Shipmaster said. He turned and met with a group of silver Sangheili in a private room.

Ryau remained standing on the table as the crowd talked. They looked scared, worried, nervous, angry. He couldn't blame them, their beliefs were shaken, and they were just told their governmental structure had fallen apart and betrayed them. To his right the Ultra came over to him. "So Major, you came with the humans?"

"Yes, Ultra, we did." Ryau responded calmly.

"Our people are allied with them?"

"You could say that. There is still a lot of bad blood between us however." Ryau nodded to his team by the door. "We are one of the first Joint Strike teams."

"Ah I see, is that why they left you to die in the ship with the Flood?" The Ultra inquired."

"I ah... hmm," Ryau thought for a moment. "I don't know actually."

"Very well, thank you for the truth Major." The Ultra walked off and disappeared into the crowd.

The Shipmaster and the others returned and started to clear the crowd. Ryau hopped off the table and walked over. "Excuse me, Shipmaster? But I request that my Team and I be allowed to leave Glorious_Retribution_. We have some other business to attend to,"

"Hmm, very well Major, and we will stop our pursuit of the Humans until we decide what to do." The Shipmaster said.

"Thank you Sir," Ryau saluted him and headed over to Naki and the others. "Come on lets go." Ryau and his team left the Dining hall. When they stepped outside they could hear the Jiralhanae Dinning hall in uproar. "Hmm it seems they're not taking it very well..."

"Well I'm surprised that they haven't killed each other yet." Naki said. "Mixed fleets were rare, but mixed ships were just plain against regulations."

"Me too, so that means we should get out of here even faster." Ryau chuckled

"Hell they lasted three years together, I don't think they'd turn on them that fast."

They headed out past the armory and Kala hopped out wearing the armor she had made. "Major, I would like to come with you." She said.

Ryau looked to Naki and she just shrugged. "Okay you can come."

"Great, where are we going?" she asked.

"To meet our human friends." Ryau noticed Kala get nervous. "And relax, they're fine. Just stick with Auva." They quickly left the compound and Ryau gave his helmet to Naki. "Can you fix my radio real quick?"

"Oh of course." Naki took the helmet and took out the radio repair kit from the armory. A few moments later she handed it back to Ryau. "There should be all better now."

"Ah, thank you." Ryau activated his long range radio and made a broadcast. _"Colonel Hartford, This is Ryau Cinotee requesting a pick up outside the Covenant base." _There was a pause for a few moments before the reply came in.

"Copy that Major Cinotee, this is Pelican Bravo eight-five. We've been tracking you and we're fifteen minutes out. What is the status of the hostiles?"

"Unknown eight-five, their guns may still be hot. I recommend that you land out side the range of their guns."

Ryau said.

"I hear that Major, coming in ETA fifteen minutes."

Ryau and his team, plus Kala, reached the extraction zone just as the Pelican was setting down and deploying a squad of Marines.

"Get aboard Major," one of the Marines said. "I don't want to be over here any longer than we have to."

"Of course Sargent, lets get aboard." Ryau hopped on and took a seat. Kala did as well but sat nervously as the Pelican lifted off into the air.

"While you were still frozen on the _Tahoma_ we made contact with the surviving UNSC personnel in the decom storage base, so don't be surprised when we start going underground." The Marine Sargent said with a laugh.

"Very well, just wake me when we arrive." Ryau closed his eyes and took a nap.

* * *

><p>AU: Hope this sounds good for you all<p>

10. Act II Pt 6 Arm Or No Arm

_****_The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act II Part
5_****_

_**Small Steps Can Take You Big Places (Arm Or No
Arm)**_

**September 2, 2555 1156 hour
>UNSC Decommissioned Weapons Base
SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee
[ACTIVE]
>

* * *

><p>Naki kicked Ryau's leg as the Pelican settled into the hangar.
"Wake up Ryau," she said.<p>

"Huh, oh we're there?" Ryau asked half awake.

Naki nodded, "yeah, we're here."

The Pelican touched down onto the landing pad and the back hatched opened up. Ryau hopped onto the ground and paused a moment. _"Three years ago I stood here human. Now I stand here as a Sangheili... not as big of a change as I would have thought."_

"Something wrong, Ryau?" Naki asked.

"No, just remembering the last time I was on this planet." Ryau looked around at the cave hangar. It was set up like the upper hangar in Crows Nest. A squad of Army Troopers in the old armor marched by the Pelican down a ramp to the motor pool. It felt good to be in that hangar, there was a lot of activity.

A Technician from the _Tahoma _walked up to Ryau and nodded. "Major, Colonel Hartford wants to see you in the Ops Center. The rest of your team will follow Sargent Foss to Bunk room zero-seven."

"Very well, Petty Officer." Ryau nodded. But then he stumbled forward as he was bumped from behind.

"Apologies, Major." A Sangheili Ultra said coming out of the Pelican, his armor was consistent with current permutations. "I did not see you standing there."

"It is alright, Excellency. I was not aware there were other Sangheili on the _Tahoma._"

"I was sent by ONI as an information officer and sniper support . My name is R'tae Kastumai "

"Very good to meet you R'tae Kastumai, now if I may, I need to go." Ryau said and headed for the lift. "See you in the bunk room Naki," he called to her. Ryau walked down the stairs into the bowels of the bunker. Water stains lined the walls and the stairwell smelled heavily of mildew. It was apparent that this section had been abandoned for quite a while. Ryau walked through the security checkpoint and entered the Ops Center. Colonel Hartford sat by a Captain, the same Captain that was in charge when Ryau was last on this base.

"Welcome to my facility Major Cinotee." The Captain greeted him with a nod.

"SpecOps Major Ryau Cinotee is formally Spartan one-zero-two, the same Spartan that went MIA early on, on this planet. He is now acting

as our Sangheili consultant on this mission." Hartford said.

"Ah, then I guess its welcome back Major." The Captain chuckled."

"Good to be back... excellency." Ryau said with a laugh of his own. "Sir."

"How was you mission? I presume it went well based on what the pilots have said."

"I say it went better than expected. We informed the local population of the result of the war and they seemed to accept it as the truth, but the Jiralhanae did not act happy." Ryau said. "The local Armory Aid wanted to come with us. She was checked out by the Lieutenant and is currently in the squad bunk room."

"I see, when she's free send her up here. Anything else I need to know?" Hartford asked.

"There was talk of a Forerunner structure being unearthed around here."

"So I heard, the people here saw it too. So we're sending you and your team there next. Science Major Cimutee and Corporal Cannon should have a field day there."

"Yes they would." Ryau chuckled. "Is that all, Sirs?"

"That is all, get some sleep, they're set for operating at night mainly here. We'll have you up in time for deployment."

"Very well Colonel." Ryau said. He saluted and turned to head down the stairs, but he stopped, "Excuse me Captain, but are the other Spartans around his base?"

"Umm, they disappeared with my best Sargent returning from a recovery mission..." The Captain said.

"Shit..." Ryau muttered. _"Well the only other humans I know are dead..again. Well that's war for you." _Ryau headed down the stairs to the bunk rooms. Down there he had to ask directions a few times before he found the correct squad room. Ryau walked in and saw Sargent Foss talking to Kala with Auva translating for her. Ryau walked over to Endesa and sat on the bench. "How are things doing here?"

"Its going well, I guess. Naki and Corporal Cannon are about Forerunners, Shan and Corporal Dosh are down at the firing range, and Auva is helping Foss talk to that girl Kala." Endesa said.

"Huh, okay. What were you up to?"

Endesa yawned and stretched. "I? I was napping,"

Ryau started to get up, "Oh sorry, I'll leave you be."

"Eh, its alright." She paused for a second, thinking over what she was about to say. "Do you mind if I ask you a question?"

"Umm sure, go ahead."

"Before we went down to Seettle..." She mispronounced Seattle. "The Colonel said something about you having a history with Spartans and then you said it wasn't a good idea because of sympathizing with the enemy or something. What did you mean by that?"

Ryau sighed. "Well..."

"Its Classified isn't it?"

"No, its just that I don't tell many people about that. But I'll tell you. Back before the war ended, I used to be a Spartan, so I was Human." Ryau paused while Endesa sat up. "On this planet, years ago, I was captured and became one of the test subjects of Project Leau. And that information is Classified. But the result of Leau turned me into a Sangheili."

"I don't believe it." Endesa laughed. "But given the Colonels beliefs then it must be true. Unless you tricked the Humans. You're fighting skills are too much like our own for you to once have been a Human."

Ryau chuckled. "If that's what you choose to believe then so be it... but I just remembered something," Ryau stood up. "Attention-" Everyone came and payed attention. "Colonel Hartford has informed me that we will be deployed tonight to recon a Forerunner ruin discovered here. So get some sleep, I know some of us haven't slept in beds yet. We'll be deploying around midnight. That is all." Everyone nodded and headed to their bunks following orders even though it was still morning. Ryau walked up to Kala and told her that the Colonel would like to see her. He walked her down there and waited for her to finish.

Kala came out about two hours later wearing a Sangheili Minor uniform and her armor in a bag. "They had one of those on the ship?" Ryau asked.

"Seems so Excellency." Kala said. "I'm being told to go to the Vehicle bay after you leave."

"So they found a position for you here." Ryau said.

"Yes, hopefully I wont be killed by some of the soldiers here. The Sargent said that the local population didn't like it that the Humans had allied with us, which is new to me as well, but they cooled down after they learned the war was over." Kala said.

"What will you be doing here?" They walked down the corridor heading to the bunk room.

"They're actually having me go out on a convoy to repair a communications relay." Kala said.

"Now that's an important job if we're to get off this planet." Ryau said as they entered the bunk room.

"Yes it is... I will be going to my bunk now"

"Very well Kala, nice talking to you." Ryau said and walked to his

bunk. He removed his armor and dressed in a clothing uniform, white with a green and black rim.

"Science Major uniform, are they still issuing that to you?" Naki asked.

"Yeah, ever since you said I was your assistant, I've been getting these instead of the SpecOps Major uniform."

"That was three years ago wasn't it? I'm sure some one would have noticed by now." Naki sat on her bunk.

"Well, I like the way these feel, they're more comfortable than the standard SpecOps." Ryau chuckled, "And technically I am still your assistant in scientific matters."

"True, true. And the Council never said I was not your mentor either before they were killed." Naki said.

"But the Sangheili High Council did, ha ha. But anyway, I'm going to continue that nap now properly." Ryau lied back down.

"Alright Ryau," Naki went off to sleep as well.

A few hours later Ryau was armored up again and walking through the Mess Hall with his tray of food. He walked over to the others and sat down by Naki. "Well, we've eaten at both groups on this planet. What do you think of them?"

"I liked having food from our own planet." Asau said.

"Yeah I agree," said Endesa.

"I like them both, Human food has an interesting quality to it." Shan said taking a bite of a cheese burger.

Just then over the bases PA system the Captain called for Ryau and his squad. _"Echo squad report to Pelican X-ray two-four-zero. Repeat, Echo to Pelican X-two-four-zero." _

"Well that us." Ryau stood and put his tray away and headed to the hangar. The only time he stopped was to pick up his Carbine and supplies from the armory. He arrived at the Pelican just as the Human half of his squad arrived. A troop carrier Hog was secured to the back.

They all hopped aboard and the Pilot shouted out of the hatch. "Drop zone is two klicks from your objective, the terrain is too rough for me to put her down with your Hog." The Pilot said.

"Fine, but what do you mean by rough." Ryau asked.

"Dense forest canopy, on the side of a mountain, lots of rocks. Stuff like that."

"Oh so not too hard then."

The Pilot laughed. "Nope not too hard."

Ryau looked over his squad. Endesa had grabbed a Plasma rifle and

Carbine, Naki a Needler and a Plasma rifle and Asau had a Fuel Rod gun and a Plasma rifle. Shan on the other hand had three weapons. He was gripping a Needle rifle while a Plasma pistol sat on his thigh and a Beam rifle was strapped to his back. The Humans were each outfitted in ODS armor and issued a BR85 Battle rifle and a M6C pistol. Only Corporal Dosh had three weapons like Shan, a SRS99D Sniper rifle was strapped to his back.

Suddenly the bases Captain came over the radio. _"Echo squad, the Flood has been spotted in the area of the drop point..."_

"Aww Hell," Corporal Dosh muttered, taking his Sniper rifle off his back. "This is useless now."

The Captain continued, _"some members of the Covenant camp may also be in the area as well. Captain Brown out." _

Shan and Corporal Dosh took their weapons over to the weapons rack and secured them for some other time. The Pelicans co-pilot leaned back and told them they were five minutes from the drop zone. The rear hatch opened back up as they neared the zone and they got a look at the terrain themselves. The Pelican's search lights revealed that they were flying by the side of a gradual mountain. The forest was under fresh snow and massive boulders sat in clearings.

"Sorta like Alpha Halo isn't it." Naki remarked.

"Yeah, only there's no ring stretching into the sky." Ryau replied. "Considering the threats on the ground, I wish there was."

"Me too..." she said.

The Pilot came over the radio. _"Okay, we're over the drop point, spinning her around to give you a view of the objective."_ The Pelican spun 180 degrees and started to lower into a clearing. Thanks to the search lights Ryau could see a Forerunner tower embedded in a cliff that was blown away from an explosion. Down below at the base of the structure the gray skeleton of an elevated highway was barely visible. Only the clearing that was the structure appeared too small to land a Pelican. _"I recommend using what's left of that highway for travel, seems like the only way through for your Warthog."

_

"Alright sounds good," Ryau said.

The Pelican landed on the highway and the roadway creaked below it. _"Radio check in one hour. Alright, it looks that this highway is more or less intact tell you reach the structure. Clear the back, dropping the Hog."_ There was a click and the Warthog dropped into the highway.

Ryau and the others jumped down to the roadway and the Pelican lifted off. "Okay, Asau, Endesa, Shan, Cannon and Dosh in the back. Foss up front with me."

Everyone nodded and got into their positions. Ryau hopped into the drivers seat and started up the Hog. He drove down the crumbling highway, swerving around holes caused by plasma bombardment and the remains of vehicles starting to rust away. They sped past the burned out hull of an Elephant leaning dangerously over the edge of a cliff.

Trees created a canopy over the highway and some had collapsed over the road.

Along side the highway the Pelican flew by when a rocket streaked through the darkness and impacted the Pelican's engines. Smoke started to billow from the engine and it pulled off. _"This is Pelican X-ray __two-four-zero, we've taken fire and we are pulling out. The rocket came from further up the highway, keep your eyes open." _

They came closer to the location that the rocket came from and slowed to a crawl. Endesa, Asau and Dosh hopped off the back and walked along side the Warthog. Suddenly, five or six infection forms leaped from the forest and splattered across the Warthogs wind shield. Ryau slammed the brakes and a rocket flew from behind a tree. It missed the Hog and exploded harmlessly on the side of another mountain. Endesa and Dosh took cover behind the remains of a car and fired into the forest followed by a few grenades. Burnt flesh, bark and dirt flew into the air and the Flood returned fire with plasma weapons. Ryau hopped out of the Warthog and joined Naki and Foss behind an overturned pickup truck.

"Grenade out!" Ryau stood up and tossed an Incendiary grenade at a Combat form that emerged from the forest.

The Combat form burst into flames and caught the Carrier form on fire and it exploded. The needles from Shan's Needle rifle detonated in the side of a Sangheili Combat form and blew it apart. The fire from the fight spread from tree to tree. Soon the entire area was ablaze. Burning branches fell onto the highway as a massive column of smoke rose into the sky. There was a loud crack and a massive burring tree fell onto the road and crushed the Warthog. The road supports creaked and groaned under stress and began to buckle.

"Everyone run! Get away from this area!" Naki yelled as she dashed for the mountain side.

Ryau followed Naki off the highway. Behind them the roadway collapsed and slid down the cliff side four-thousand feet to the lake below. Ryau stopped to look behind and saw the way they had driven collapse too. Auva and the others watched as well.

"Well, I guess we're walking." Shan said.

"Yeah, but at least we're close." Ryau said. "Everyone okay?"

"We are all accounted for and no one seems too be bleeding." Foss said counting heads.

"Alright lets get moving." Ryau said and headed down the highway on foot.

Snow flakes mixed with ash fell and started to coat the roadway and trees. The orange glow of the fire lit up the area behind them, and eventually they arrived at the Forerunner structure without any more fights with the Flood.

"You know... there are a lot of Flood out here for a place that hasn't been scouted yet." Naki said suddenly.

"Well the Covenant camp has sent plenty of scouts here." Corporal

Cannon said.

"But we've seen a majority of Human Combat forms, a good share of Covenant but a lot have been human. How many were lost when the _Tahoma went down?"_

"Hmm, less than ten from the crash, then twenty something from the Flood attacks. And the Decom. Base said that they haven't lost more than fifteen since the Flood showed up. But before they locked down and only sent scouts for supplies they were losing a lot."

"Well I might just be thinking out loud but there could be another source providing the Flood with bodies. Another survivors camp maybe."

"That's entirely possible." Cannon said. They finished taking and looked at the structure before them.

It was a simple Forerunner design, smooth metal and blue lighting. They walked through the entry way and entered a large open room that was big enough to fit an Elephant with ample room to maneuver. A pedestal rose from the center and a massive holographic projection of the planet filled the room. Lights flickered on and holographic banners appeared on the walls. An announcement in the Forerunner language played from a speaker somewhere.

"Naki, Cannon, you two catch that?" Ryau asked.

"All I got was, something Apex station active, what about you Cannon?" Naki replied.

"I never studied the verbal Forerunner language." Corporal Cannon said.

"I see." Naki and Cannon moved on and investigated the pedestal and its holographic projections.

Corporal Dosh and Sargent Foss were checking against the wall for any additional rooms. Endesa, Asau and Shan looked at the rings of white light expanding from the pedestal. Ryau realized that he was overdue for the radio check and called in to report on what happened.

"Hmm this seems to be some sort of map room." Corporal Cannon said.

"Maybe..." Naki reached to touch a blinking red dot labeled _Apex Station_thinking it will enlarge that portion of the map.

There was a bright flash...

"Major Cinotee? Major Cinotee do you copy...?" There was a click as Captain Brown switched radio channels. "Anyone from Echo squad, can you read me? I've lost contact with Major Cinotee." He waited a moment.

_"Captain, this is Sargent Foss of Echo squad. Major Cinotee and the others vanished in a flash a moment ago." _

"Is there any sign of them?" Brown asked.

"Well... we've got an arm."

* * *

><p>AU:Well, here's part 6, the end of Act II, please point out any spelling mistakes and stuff.

R'tae Kastumai belongs to Rocet306 on DevantArt

11. Act III Pt 1 Greetings

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act III Part 1

_Greetings _

**September 3, 2555 0220 hour

>**Unknown Location

>**SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [ACTIVE]**

* * *

><p>Ryau blinked the white flash away and pulled himself off the floor. The ringing in his ears ceased and he could hear the noises of the room.<p>

"What the hell was that?" Cannon muttered.

"Correction, it was a teleporter station..." Naki said.

"Ryau! Shan's hurt!" Endesa shouted.

Ryau turned and ran over to where Shan lay. His left arm was cut off at the elbow and the wound was cauterized. Naki ran over and pulled the medical kit from her pack. Shan groaned as Naki quickly applied anti-bacterial ointment and then wrapped it in bandages. "It looks like it was cauterized immediately, he didn't loose any blood." Naki said with a sigh of relief.

"Well that's good, glad you're not going to die Shan. But what happened to cause this?" Ryau asked Naki.

"My guess is that the teleporter had some sort of security wall activate. Something that would come in handy if you teleport right when the Flood was charging at you." Naki said. "I think Shan had his arm outside the radius of the system."

"I guess that white line did have a purpose..." Shan muttered.

"Are you doing alright?" Ryau asked him.

"Well I have a strong feeling of motion sickness but that's pretty much it, I don't even feel anything where my arm was." Shan sat up and looked around. "So where are we?"

"My guess is the place called the Apex Station. Other than that I don't know." Naki glanced around.

Ryau helped Shan up and he leaned against a wall. "Well this isn't

just an empty room, there should be some other exit." Ryau switched on his night vision and looked around. There was a hallway leading off behind where Asau and Endesa stood. "Hey Asau, behind you is a hallway, see if you can activate the lights."

"Alright." Asau walked down the hallway, but before she got five feet, the room lit up. It looked almost the exact same as the other room they were in a few moments ago. "Hmm, I didn't have to do anything really. That's my kind of lighting system."

Ryau and Naki headed down the hallway ahead of Asau. They passed many doors that were sealed but a few of them were blown open. None were unlocked. "Looks like they didn't want anything getting through." Naki said.

"Yeah, probably the Flood."

They came into another room. The lights came on to reveal a bank of cryo pod like cylinders. The other wall was a massive window that looked into a cave of Forerunner machinery. Suddenly there was a loud boom, outside the window the machinery started up once again after sitting thousands of years. Holographic screens came online, all displaying a start up symbol. A partially assembled Sentinel rose from the center of a table holographic diagnostic displays flashed into existence around it. Endesa and the others came into the room.

"Wow..." Cannon muttered.

Naki looked into one of the pods. "Seems tight." She said stepping into one.

Ryau walked over to one nearby her and examined it. There was basic padding along the sides and a control panel built into the side. Suddenly from behind him there was an explosion. He turned and saw Sentinels rimmed in red flew out of their ports and opened fire on Shan and Asau in the corner. They raised their rifles and returned fire. Cannon was hit by an exploding Sentinel and hit a button on a control panel. Ryau was slammed into the pod by the sudden closing door. The door sealed with a hiss and he could see Shan and the others retreat back down the hallway.

"Shit" Ryau pushed against the door but it didn't budge.

But then there was more commotion outside the pod. More Sentinels came out of the ports, this time rimmed in black and green camouflage. The new Sentinels fired on the other ones, destroying them. One of the black rimmed Sentinels hovered in front of his pod. Ryau heard a whine coming from the sides of the pod and then there was a flash and all he saw was darkness.

Time passed, he couldn't tell how long though, seconds, minutes, hours maybe days. But then there was an intense white flash. When it cleared, he was standing on a grassy hillside, Forerunner symbols and text floated about. Ryau saw movement too his left, he looked and spotted Naki stumbling out of a forest.

"Naki!" He shouted.

"Ryau! There you are!" She shouted back. They ran and met each other

by a river.

"Where are we?"

Before Naki could answer a small Sentinel Constructor popped into existence. It said something in the Forerunner language but then stopped and switched to Sangheilian. "You are in Data cluster eight-seven-four. Marissa will be here shortly to escort you out."

"Marissa? Who is that?" Naki asked the Constructor.

"You will know soon enough." And with that, the little machine disappeared.

"So... we're in a computer system." Ryau said.

"Appears so. Very interesting."

A hum rose from the hills and the world started to fade away to darkness. "Well here we go again, back to the darkness." Ryau said.

The darkness returned and the passage of time was impossible to tell yet again. But finally a speck of light appeared and he awoke in the pod. A monitor floated in front of the pods window, it was painted red, blue and gold. The pod doors opened and Ryau stumbled out, he looked over at Naki's pod and she was doing the same.

"Welcome to this installation. We don't really have a name for it but it's been our home for a hundred thousand years." The Monitor said. "You're lucky, if monitor spheres were attached to those machines you'd be floating around like me."

Naki and Ryau exchanged glances. "Wait, who are you?" Naki asked.

"I am Marissa, one of the last remaining Forerunners." She looked to Ryau. "But a more important question is who are You?"

"Um, I am Ryau 'Cinotee. A er... Sangheili SpecOps Major" Ryau replied.

"Yes, but who were you. Your DNA shows traces of Reclaimer DNA, and you're wearing the device my mother made." Marissa stared at the device getting ever closer, much like the Sentinel on the Ark did when it saw the device. Marissa shook out of it. "So, I am presuming that you were once a Reclaimer and you became a Meddler."

"Meddler?" Naki asked.

"Nickname for you species and the others of your Covenant. I heard it from the Monitor of Installation zero four via slip-space packet. Just because we lost the ability to send doesn't mean we cant receive." Marissa mumbled on.

"What?"

"Nevermind. Okay I'm not doubting your intelligence but you know you can change back any time just by pressing that icon right there." She nodded to the humans symbol.

"Yes I know how to change back, but I have my reasons." Ryau said.

Marissa looked to Naki. "Ah, mates?"

"No, not yet." Naki said quickly.

"Well... I know of the war between you and the Reclaimers and I noticed one with you, prisoner?" Marissa asked.

"No, the war has been over for three years, we're allies of sorts." Ryau said.

"Ah, that will be good news for my friends."

"Friends?"

"Some Reclaimers found their way down here years ago. They've been trapped here ever since." Marissa said.

"Hmm strange." Naki switched to another subject. "Why were the other Sentinels attacking us for?"

"They were under the command of Jeaso. Less than a thousand years after the activation of the Halo array, he went mad. There were four of us, and we were sent here and put into these Monitor spheres to save our people. But things didn't go as planned. Jeaso went mad and we learned that he was capturing people from the surface and altering them on the genetic level. So, me and another went to fight against him with our Sentinels. He killed her, he killed one of us, so I started using guerrilla tactics and the other disappeared into hiding."

"That is quite a story. It's hard to believe that it's really happening. But from what we've observed, its true." Naki looked about the room. "Is there any way out of this massive facility?"

"No, Jeaso destroyed the teleporter controls and the only other surviving station is inside his compound." Suddenly there was a loud beep and Marissa looked around frantically. "Oh no, he activated the cleansing system for this level! Go, go now! Follow the road to my friends, your friends are waiting outside."

Ryau and Naki grabbed their lost weapons off the ground and sprinted down the hallway. They hopped over old destroyed Sentinels and sets of ancient Forerunner armor. They headed down a ramp just as the upper floor flashed white and the light burned their backs. The heat stopped and they continued down the halls. Ryau and Naki headed further down the halls and eventually they came to an elevator. Taking it down, it dropped them in a large room that looked very similar to the one on Alpha Halo.

"Well I think we're lost." Ryau said.

"Yeah I think we are too."

Ryau looked around, the lower part of the room was flooded with murky green water and the only door was across the gap. "Great... the bridge control is broken. Feel like a swim?" Ryau popped the

re-breather into place.

"My pleasure," Naki popped hers in too.

They jumped into the dark water and sank to the floor. The visibility was a max of only one meter and the bottom was coated in muck. They marched through the sediment and came to an open door.

"I'm glad the suits are air tight, this water looks like it's been sitting for centuries." Naki radioed.

"Yeah me too, wouldn't want to taste it." Ryau chuckled.

They swam through the door and down the flooded hallway. After what felt like a mile of twists and turns, they ended up in a cleaner pool of water that led to a way to the surface. The room was dark, but light from the illuminated panels showed detail. Vines and grass grew where centuries of dirt had gathered, small bugs flew around and an amphibian of some kind hopped into the pool, disappearing below the lily pads. They climbed out of the water and sat in the grass.

Ryau removed the re-breather and sniffed the air. "Ah, smells clean and fresh." Ryau looked out the missing walls at the valley below. "Looks beautiful."

"Yes it does, although I have no idea where we are." Naki said.

"Well we can't see that far, so let's some sleep and wait for morning." Ryau pulled a sleeping bag from his pack and unfolded the tiny package until he could fit inside. He laid it down in the grass and removed his upper body armor, save for the shield generator.

"That's a good idea." Naki did the same and sat down next to him. "You take first watch."

"Very well, I'll get you up when it's your turn." Ryau said. Naki went to sleep and Ryau gripped his Carbine and watched.

Hours later, Naki woke Ryau as the moon started to change to the sun. They packed up their bags and headed out of the overgrown structure.

"Gods, would you look at the size of this place!" Ryau stared at the massive area that was the Forerunner facility. "I know that Shield worlds and Halo's are larger, but they made those planets and installations."

"This looks to be the largest sub-surface Forerunner facility ever, on a naturally formed planet." Naki said looking out to the distance, towards the walls shrouded with clouds.

Ryau looked at the way they had come. They were at the base of a mountain that reached up to the emerging sun. "Well the sun and moon are holographic."

"Yes, seems to be true. But the heat coming from it is realistic enough." Naki squinted. Ryau turned back towards the valley and a glimmer of metal caught his eye. He leaned down and brushed the dirt

away. It was some sort of Forerunner pistol. "Oh interesting, I've seen my share of Forerunner weapons but I haven't seen one of those before."

"Yeah, it's very interesting." Ryau aimed at the structures wall and fired. The beam burnt a hole in the Forerunner metal. "Wow, powerful." Ryau said.

Yes, very." Naki looked at the hole. "How are we going to find the others?"

"Well I was going to radio them. So here it goes." Ryau paused for a moment and adjusted the frequently on his data pad. "Asau, Endesa, Cannon, Shan. Anyone copy me?"

_"Major? This is Asau, it's good to hear from you. We've set up a camp on the road that the Forerunner Marissa mentioned." _Asau radioed back.

"Alright, send up a flare, we'll come to you." Ryau replied. A few moments later a flare shot up into the morning twilight. "We see it, on our way." Ryau and Naki started down the hill, toward the location the flare came from. The forest was thick and humid. Ryau hopped up onto a down tree and crossed a river. Naki hopped up behind him and they found themselves looking down a cliff into a clear lake.

"Well that was close." Naki said.

"Yeah, it was." Ryau looked to his left. "Over there, there's that road." A wide gray path wound its way up the mountain and disappeared into the forest. "We can just follow this cliff until we hit it."

"Sounds like a plan." They walked along side the cliff edge toward the road that would take them to the rest of their team.

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**September 5, 2555 2356 hours  
>Standard IV<br>Pelican X532 enroute to offline Deep Space  
Communications Relay  
>[ExCovenant] Tech Kala 'Velamn<strong>
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><p>Kala rode in the rear compartment of the Human drop ship. She was  
heading to help fix the Humans Deep Space Communication relay that  
had been taken out when the battle first started three years ago. Her  
armor lights glowed red in night with the Pelican's interior lights  
shut off. The stench of the Parasite in the air was distinct. The  
Flood was active. The Pelican shook and rose up, narrowly missing the  
tree tops.<p>
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"Turbulence." The human soldier known as Sargent Foss said.

Kala nodded unable to speak his language.

The Pelican shuttered again and dipped down and cut off the tree tops. Suddenly there was a flash from the ground and an explosion erupted out of the Pelican's rear engines. Kala grabbed her restraints as the Pelican fell into the forest bellow. The Pelican crashed through tree after tree, before slamming into a boulder. Kala

freed herself of the restraints and she slumped to the ground. Her shields were still beeping and her left eye cover was shattered. She pulled herself up and limped for the weapons on the wall as a greenish fog rolled through the open ramp.

The others stirred and started to rise. But everyone stopped moving when a loud screech echoed through the forest outside. Four Flood infection forms leaped from the fog onto a Technician closest to the ramp. Sargent Foss ripped out his M6D and fired three rounds into a Combat form's chest that attempted to rip the Technician out of the Pelican. A Marine ran over to the Technician and ripped the Infection forms from his chest. Another soldier hit the hatch close button. The ramp squirted hydraulic fluid, but it still closed. The medic checked the technician and then there was a loud thump as a Combat form slammed into the other side of the door. Kala sat back down in a crash seat while Sargent Foss brought a medic to the cockpit.

"Damn, what are we going to do now.." Corporal Dosh said.

Kala shrugged and looked out the small window on the hatch.

"You know, Kala, our helmets have translation software." He said.

"Oh, very well then." She said in Sangheilian.

Sargent Foss walked back in. "The pilots are fine, they can walk. We need to reach that Comm Relay, its the best place to hole up."

"Yes, I can see the dish's lights from here." Kala said.

"So it's close then." Dosh added.

Suddenly there was an explosion as the fire reached the left fuel tank. "We need to move now!" Foss yelled. "Get that hatch open."

"Yes sir," a Marine replied.

Kala and the other Technicians grabbed their bags as the hatch fell open. The Combat form that had hit the hatch earlier had been ripped apart by the explosion. The light from the flame illuminated the area and they ran. Kala spotted the flashing blue light on top of the dish and headed for that. The others followed her up the ridge but they were separated from the dish by a ten foot polycrrete wall. It was old, vines and plants had grown up its base and some cracks were evident in its frame. Old signs were posted at regular intervals that said, _Area Restricted by Office Of Naval Intelligence Section two, UNSC Communication Relay four._

"Dosh get a satchel on the wall." Foss said backing away from the wall. The others did the same as Dosh placed the explosive charge on a weak point on the wall. Gunshots echoed in the forest behind them as the others opened fire on the parasite.

"Fire in the hole!" Dosh shouted. Kala ran behind a nearby tree and waited. A moment later there was an explosion and a hole had opened up in the wall. She and the others ran through the hole and down the ridge and to the structure. But they found door was sealed and the keypad was smashed.

"Williams, get the door open." Sargent Foss ordered one of the Technicians.

Williams pulled a panel from the wall by the door and connected a data-pad. The small red light by the keypad flashed to life. "Okay, we've got a connection," Williams said.

Foss, Dosh and the other Marines opened fire at a group of Combat forms that jumped around the corner. The small light turned green and the doors slid open. Kala and the other Technicians rushed inside, followed by the soldiers. Once everyone was in, Williams shut the doors.

The air was stale and smelled of mildew. The Marines' flashlights flashed around, reflecting over controls and screens. "We should find the power systems." Kala suggested.

"Yes, Williams and Dosh, head along that wall. According to the schematics, it should be around there."

"Yes sir." Dosh and Williams said.

Kala's night vision adjusted to the darkness and she watched Dosh and Williams walk around the corner that Foss had pointed out. She could see something slumped against the wall at the other end of the room, but it wasn't clear. A few moments later the lights slowly brightened. Kala blinked and her eyes readjusted to the brightness. She found that the figure that she had been looking at in the darkness was a human skeleton in a rotting lab coat.

One of the marines moved to the skeleton and checked its pockets. "I got ID," the Marine said. "Doctor Andrea Miller, Xenoarchaeology. And an ONI section two pass."

"Why would an Xenoarchaeologist be at a Communication Relay?" Williams asked out loud.

"We'll worry about that later, right now we need to bring this station online." Foss said. "Kala, go with Williams and find out if these computers still run."

"Very well Sargent." Kala responded. She and Williams headed over to the computers and started working. When they looked over the consoles it became apparent that someone had smashed them deliberately, some hard drives were pulled from their housing and snapped in two.

"There was no reason to do this... and there was a lot more memory than a standard comm hub. What were they hiding here.." Williams muttered to herself.

Kala glanced over at the Xenoarchaeologist and noticed a heavy pipe by her side. Even with the damage, in a matter of hours they had brought basic systems back online and were beginning to run diagnostics on the system connections. "Well soon we will find out what they were hiding here." Kala said to Williams.

* * *

><p>AU: Here you go everyone, the beginning to Act 3. Enjoy.
Read and review!

12. Act III Pt 2 Fog

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act III Part 2

Fog

**September 8 2555

>**Massive Forerunner Facility

>**SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]**

* * *

><p>"There you all are." Ryau said as they spotted Asau and the others up the road. "Head down the mountain side, we're waiting down here." Ryau radioed them.<p>

"_Very well Ryau, on our way."_Endesa radioed back.

Ryau took a seat on a fallen tree and waited for them to show up. Naki sat beside him looking out at the forerunner symbols glowing on the massive barriers. "Those symbols seems so familiar." Naki said.

"Of course they do." Ryau popped the Device out of its place and showed her the underside. The same symbol that was on the barriers, was engraved onto the back of the Device. "If what this Marissa says is true, then the Device was made by her mother. It could be like a family symbol."

"Ah true," Naki said.

A few moments later Asau and the others arrived over the hillside. "There you are Major," she said.

"Yes, how have you four fared overnight?" Ryau asked.

"We've done fine, set up camp outside the door and waited for you to come out but you never did." Endesa said.

"Yeah, we kind of got lost in the tunnels and came out in some damaged building."

"Ah, very well. Where are we headed Ryau?" Asau asked.

"Well that Marissa said to follow the road, I think that's what we'll do." Ryau answered and turned to the way down. "But it looks like the road is out that crosses that lake, I guess we're walking around."

They started down the mountain side via the switchbacks built into the side by the grass covered road. Ryau took a short cut and slid down between the ferns and trees onto the switchback directly bellow him. He turned and saw the others do the same, except for Shan, who slowly inched down the side. Once they reached the lake, they met around its shore and broke out the food rations that Ryau and Naki

stole from the Covenant camp for breakfast. Only Cannon had a Human MRE. The Sangheili rations were made up of dried Munta beef, sweet Morla Rolls and an energy drink, while the Human were just a bunch of freeze dried vitamin bars.

"Damn yours smells so much better than mine." Cannon said as she watched the meals heat.

"Here have one." Ryau tossed her the package. "They've tested it and our foods are safe for you to eat."

"Oh thanks," Cannon set the Human MRE back into her pack and heated the one Ryau gave her. Once it was heated, Cannon took a bite of the Munta beef. "Oh, this is better than I expected."

After they finished their meals and got some water from the lake, they headed off into the forest towards the massive barrier. The Forest was thick with ivy vines and ferns,. Ryau activated his wrist blade and began to hack their way through.

They hopped through streams and over rocks , and an hour after they left the lake, they reached the barrier. "Well this is awfully large." Naki said.

Before Ryau could answer, his radio started to pick up a beeping sound. Moments later there was a hum like shields recharging and then a pop and the beeping returned.

"That's odd," Naki said, her radio picking up the same thing.

"Let's follow it and see what it is." Cannon suggested.

"Very well, keep your guard up." Ryau said.

They followed the signal for a few more miles along the barrier and eventually they were close enough to hear the beeping without the use of their radios. Sitting against the wall was a pile of dead leaves and vines. Ryau knelt down and brushed the compost pile away. He saw underneath and leaned back. "Gods..." he muttered.

Under the pile was a man, a Spartan. The designation _A103_ was barely visible on the side of the helmet. Behind the shattered visor, the Spartan's skull was pressed against the sort-wave radio transmitter and the shields were continuously charging then going down. Ryau glanced down at the waist, the armor had been burned away and the bones were carbonized.

"Ryau. who is this?" Naki asked.

"He was one of my teammates back when I was a Spartan." Ryau muttered. "He was a good friend."

"I'm sorry" Naki said.

"I guess it's alright, that's what happens in a war." Ryau stood back up.

"You were a Human?" Everyone but Endesa and Naki asked simultaneously.

"Yes, I was..." Ryau quickly brought everyone up to speed on his history with the UNSC and Humanity.

"Hmm, well that explains why why you know so much about Humans and seem at ease with them while we're all a bit nervous." Asau said.

Ryau picked up a rock and tossed it away. "And if you're wondering, my records are not one hundred percent fake. All the campaigns that are mentioned up until Standard are my actual records only switched to the Covenant side. Mostly the handy work of Ultra Zeik 'Carunme but I earned my rank."

"We believe you," Shan said sincerely. "We won't doubt our Major," he chuckled a moment later.

Cannon leaned down and picked an object out of the brush. It was a SPNKR Rocket Launcher. "The one thing we don't have is heavy weapons." Cannon spoke quickly, the effects of a Sangheili energy drink still in her system even after a few hours.

"Umm, very well Cannon," Ryau checked for he Spartan's dog tags and put them in his pack.

Naki saw him do that and then spotted a similar chain around Ryau's neck. "What's that around your neck, Ryau?"

Ryau stood up and pulled it out from around his neck. "At times I still wear my old dog tags. But only once in a while. This being a joint Human mission I felt it was appropriate." Ryau made a motion to leave. "Now let's move out, this is not question Ryau time." He chuckled.

"Yes Excellency." Shan nodded.

Ryau lead them down through the forest along side the massive barrier. Gradually, they trekked through snow and glaciers. At even intervals there were access ports to the interior of the barrier, though they were too high to reach.

"Cold..." Cannon muttered, she was feeling the cold now that the energy drink was wearing off and the fact she wasn't wearing a temperature controlled suit.

"Yeah, we're looking for an open access port so we can get out of this." Ryau said.

Just a few seconds later the port up ahead opened suddenly. Seven Sentinels and an Enforcer, painted red, flew out of it. Ryau and his group ducked down and dashed for cover in the forest as a Sentinel Major swept the area. Two Sentinels broke off from the detachment and flew towards where Endesa had jumped. She fired three rounds into the Sentinels shields and retreated into a gully. Ryau leaped up from the tree well and grabbed the Forerunner weapon from his thigh. He fired at the Sentinels perusing Endesa and the beam cut through one of the Sentinels anti-grav engines and it fell with a thud.

Ryau ran over and smashed it open with a large rock, taking its gun. He looked up in time and watched Endesa take hers down. Alerted to the combat, the other Sentinels turned and moved to engage Ryau and

Endesa. The Sentinels glided around a tree and opened fire on Ryau. He rolled out of the way and the beam scorched the ferns.

"Destroy them!" Ryau shouted.

The Sentinels fired and hit Ryau in the leg, his shields broke and singed his armor before he jumped away. Naki and the others got up from their hiding places and opened fire on the five Sentinels. Endesa leaped from behind a boulder as a rocket from the Enforcers struck her previous spot. Hundreds of red projectiles sailed through the air from the Enforcer and detonated like Needler needles. Cannon grabbed the SPNKR and launched a rocket at the Enforcer. The explosion took it down and two standard Sentinels that were flying close by.

Another port opened and a new detachment arrived, this new one was lead by a large Super Sentinel. Orange and blue beams cut through the trees and set fire to the area. Ryau jumped out of the way as the beam from the Super Sentinel sliced right through the tree he was taking cover behind. He dove into the snow and threw a grenade that stuck the Super Sentinel's bottom boom.

"Go through the port, quick! Before it closes!" Ryau yelled.

Shan pulled himself inside the port and moved to help the others with his good arm. Naki found a control panel by the door and locked it down right after Ryau got in. "This access port will not hold the Sentinels back for long, we need to move quickly." Naki said.

"Agreed, let us continue down that direction" Ryau pointed further down the interior of the barrier.

They headed down a catwalk to a central pathway that closely resembled the long corridors that spanned the Quarantine walls on Installation 05. The air was damp and a cool fog rolled across the floor, adding to the resemblance. Ryau glanced over the edge, it seemed to go on forever, but he could hear rushing water somewhere far below.

"Creepy," Cannon muttered to herself.

"It is..." Ryau muttered back to her, remembering the Flood chasing him through them on Delta Halo.

The dim lights on the walls guided them through the structure and they followed them down a ramp. The Sentinels did not reappear behind them, Ryau couldn't tell if that was a good or a bad sign. As they went further into the barrier, the roaring from the water became louder. They reached the bottom of the ramp and Ryau dropped a light stick down over the edge of the platform. It fell and fell, illuminating nothing until it hit water.

"Some drop," Shan said, looking over the edge.

"Yes... that is definitely a recurring feature in Forerunner structures." Naki said.

"And their lack of safety rails." Cannon added.

"Makes you wonder if we're always crawling around in their maintenance shafts." Ryau said with a chuckle.

"That's always a possibility, obviously this here isn't a main corridor." Naki said. Ahead at the end of the platform, a control console glowed by itself. Naki walked up and pressed some buttons. "It's a Gondola control interface." A few seconds later lights on pillars around the platform came online and the entire platform shook as it detached from the ramp.

"And I'm guessing the platform is the Gondola?" Cannon said.

"Correct, lets see where we're going." Naki tapped the controls and brought up a map of the Gondola System. One track was glowing brighter than the others and it left the Barrier wall and headed off to the left deeper into the forest of one of the regions. Naki started reading the text scrolling along the side. "We're being redirected to power relay seventeen. It appears to be beside the power conduit that is acting as the road we were told to follow."

"Well it looked like you needed a hand getting back on track. My Sentinels have taken care of the ones that attacked you for now." Marissa's voice came out of the control console. Four Sentinel Majors with a black stripe hovered over from a Sentinel Launcher. "_I've sent you an escort, they will stay with you while you head to the others."_

"Thank you, appreciate the help." Ryau said.

"My pleasure, Major." A small icon that had appeared now disappeared and she was gone.

The small icon on the map was about half way to the exit and they had already been traveling for an hour. Naki checked in the bandages she had placed on Shan's stump and noted that it was getting infected. "If we don't get proper medicines, we may have a problem here." She commented.

"We'll see if Marissa has something that could help at this relay we are heading too." Shan said. "Forerunners have really good medical systems if I remember."

"Yes, they do. I'm sure you will be fine." Naki said.

Ryau watched ahead of them, at a bank of greenish fog that they were about to enter. A distant screech echoed through the corridor. "Marissa, are you there?" Ryau radioed.

"Yes Major, I'm here." She radioed back.

"Have the Flood found their way down here?" Ryau pulled the Sentinel beam from beside his Carbine.

"Unfortunately, yes. They have. Through the nearest infected zone is no where near my region."

"Well you might want to check that again because it looks like we're entering one now." The Gondola entered the green fog and it rolled

over the decks. "Naki, get everyone ready, I think we're about to engage the Flood!"

"Gods, I thought we were done with them." Naki quickly wrapped Shan's arm with new bandages and sprayed it with a temporary sealant. The Gondola rolled deeper into the fog, green particles floated by Ryau and the rest of the group. "It is my scientific opinion, that this stuff is not good to breath." She put on her and Shan's rebreather. Ryau and the others did the same.

"Damn, I'll dispatch more Sentinels to your position and get you out of those tunnels." _

"Very well. Sounds like a good plan to me." Ryau said.

The Sentinels that hovered above them at the moment activated blue sensor lights and scanned through the fog. Suddenly four combat forms jumped across a gap and landed on the left side of the Gondola. The Gondola tilted and creaked from the extra weight. Ryau fired on them with his Sentinel beam and burned the first Combat form to a crisp. Marissa's Sentinel back-up arrived and started to burn the Flood. Behind Ryau, Naki and Shan fired at a swarm of Infection forms that had crawled over the side.

"Where are they all coming from!" Naki yelled, "there weren't this many survivors!" She fired her Plasma rifle into the swarm and Infections forms exploded. She covered Shan as the bits of flesh and internal gasses drifted over. On the other side of the Gondola Endesa, Asau and Cannon opened fire on a new Flood group. Marissa's Sentinels moved over to assist them there, Ryau depleted his Sentinel beam and switched to his Carbine before unloading a cartage into a Pure form.

"_Hold on! Sharp turn ahead!" _Marissa said. Ryau grabbed onto a hand rail and a moment later the Gondola swung left and through a large port. The fog cleared and the Gondola was thousands of feet above the surface and descending rapidly. The last of the Flood was cleared from the Gondola and Ryau watched the port close and seal the rest of the Flood inside the barrier.

"Umm Marissa, we're still dropping." Naki said looking over the edge.

"_I know, I'm having trouble regaining control." _

"Ladies and gentlemen, assume crash positions." Cannon said taking a seat in the control room._
>

**September 5, 2555 2356 hours
>Standard IV
Offline Deep Space Communications Relay 4

>[ExCovenant] Tech Kala 'Velamn
**

* * *

><p>After a night of working something finally popped up on the Kala's screen. "Williams, look at this"<p>

"Sargent! We found something" Williams said.

"What is it?" Sargent Foss came over from the facilities communications room.

"While searching through the intact data cores, we discovered the facilities schematics. There appears to be a hidden room just off the dining hall. Electrical systems indicate a substantial amount of the facilities power is routed there." Kala explained.

"Hmm, well then let's see what's back there." Foss took them back to the cafeteria where the others already sat, eating their MREs. "Where is the false panel Williams?"

"Right here, sir." She pointed to one of the vending machines. _Out of Order_ flashed on it's display.

"Alright, Dosh come give me a hand." Foss moved to the left of the panel and he and Dosh lifted it out of the way. Behind the vending machine panel was a tram that went bellow the surface. "Well I wonder where this goes. Connors, Smith, stay up here and keep the station secured. Everyone else, down with us."

Kala went back to where she left her pack by the computers and grabbed it. She checked its content. Fairly satisfied she had the necessary necessities, she headed back with the others. Sargent Foss was on the radio with Human command.

"Colonel? This is Sargent Foss, do you copy?" Foss radioed.

"Negative, this is Captain Brown, Colonel Hartford is out of radio contact. He should be back with in a few hours."

>

>"Captain, we've resorted power to the relay and are waiting for the systems to debug. But we've found a body of a Xenoarchaeologist and Kala and Williams uncovered a secret room here. There's a tram inside it." Foss radioed.<p>

"Hmm that's interesting. I want you to investigate it, something seems off."

>_

>"Of course sir, I'll leave Connors and Smith on the surface, Williams, Lee, Dosh and Kala will head down will me."_

"Good plan, next radio check-in in one hour."

"Copy that, Echo squad out." Foss finished up on the radio and joined Kala and the others on the tram. "Captain Brown wants us to check it out, so we have authorization now."

"Very well," Kala said and pressed the trams down button. The tram creaked and started to descend through the layers of rock.

"This shaft goes for miles..." Williams looked over a control console. "We may be here for a few minutes."

"What the Hell was ONI doing down here." Dosh muttered.

"Well that's what we're heading down to find out." Foss said.

Less than twenty minutes later the tram stopped descending and began to move forward, into a new tunnel. Kala looked out the Trams windows as the tunnel opened up to a massive cavern. Small human structures dotted the walls and lights were strung about. But not a single soul was down there, other than Kala and the others. The view disappeared as the tram entered another tunnel. They continued through the tunnel until they entered a station, much like the one on the surface. The tram slowed and stopped in the station and the doors eased open. Stale, mildew smelling air drifted into the tram. Kala and the others coughed as they breathed in the bad air.

"Air...controls...on the platform." Williams coughed. She exited the tram and ran for the button, activating the three year old ventilation system. On the surface, massive turbines activated and drew in fresh air for the facility miles below the surface. A few more moments of coughing and the fresh air reached Kala and the others in the tram car. Williams took a deep breath. "There, thats better"

Dosh, Foss and Lee moved out and secured the area. Satisfied with the lack of life, Sargent Foss moved over to where Williams and Kala were on the computer consoles. "Is there a way we can easily communicate with the surface? I doubt our radios can receive at this distance under the surface."

"Yes Sargent, there is a comm interface right here." Kala moved away and handed him a phone receiver.

"Thank you Kala." Foss activated the phone system. "Connors, Smith, are you receiving?"

A few moments later they replied. _"Sargent? Sorry for the delay, we needed to locate the phone."_

"Understood. We arrived at the bottom safely, how are things looking top side?" Foss asked. Kala and Williams were back, hard at work, trying to get the systems full power restored.

"Well we're getting a ping from orbit. Sensors have it as an ONI Prowler. But there hasn't been any out system transmissions since we've brought the facility online."

"Weird, one of the reasons that this mission was bumped up was that a Prowler was taken out here. Any reading on derbies?"

Kala looked up from her console as Connors reply played through the phone system. _"Negative, there's a lot of parts from ships but none that are still radiating heat like the Prowler would be. And there's UNSC transponders coming from-" _The line buzzed and went dead.

"Connors, Smith? Do you copy." Foss said. The line remained dead.

"Maybe the line is damaged, it has been three cycles since this facility was operational." Kala said.

"Maybe... find anything out?" Foss asked.

"Well it seems that there is a forerunner facility bellow this."

Williams said.

"Let's go find it." Foss said. They exited the tram station and went into the cave facility.

* * *

><p>AU:
Well, I hoped to get this out by June 20th, but alas, I failed. Hope you enjoy reading. And LORC turns 3 this this month, yay!

13. Act III Pt 3 Reunion

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act III Part 3

Reunion

**September 9 2555

>Massive Forerunner Facility
SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]**

* * *

><p>The Gondola fell at an angle, accelerating towards the ground. Ryau held onto the guard rail as he and the others took shelter in the Gondola's control room. He took a seat and strapped in. "Marissa, anytime would be nice."<p>

_"I told you, I'm having trouble regaining control. And at this speed even when I do, you'll still hit the ground. So assume crash positions."_Marissa said.

"Already done, now get us to a safer speed." Ryau said.

The repulsion engines bellow them flared as Marissa struggled to regain control of the Gondola. As it got closer to the ground, it started to flatten out. But before it managed to do so, it smashed into the ground. The Gondola ripped up trees and smashed boulders. Endesa's ancient seat straps snapped and she flew into the lower level of the control room. The Gondola dug a trench, two kilometers long into the region before coming to rest at the base of a mountain. The holographic sun faded and the facilities sky turned to night.

Ryau awoke with a jump. His restraints snapped and he slipped out of the seat. His right arm ached and he looked down at it and found the Device was cracked open. "Oh fuck, not again." Ryau tore off his forearm guard and checked to see if any liquid was leaking. Thankfully there was not. He grabbed his Carbine and checked the area around the wrecked control room for any hostiles. The area was clear of any Flood or Sentinels that could pose a threat. There was a shifting from bellow the control room, Ryau slowly walked back in and pointed his Carbine at the ramp.

A few moments later Endesa lifted herself out. "Ah... what happened?" She held her left arm, a bone was sticking out just before the elbow.

"We crashed, came in too hard." Ryau said and checked the others as they started waking. They were lucky, there were not any major injuries opposed to Endesa's broken arm. "Do you need medical attention?"

"No... maybe. Once Naki gets up." Endesa said.

"I-I'm up, whats the problem?" Naki pulled the restraints off and sat up.

"My arm... it's broken." Endesa limped over to Naki and showed her the exposed bone.

"Oh my. There is not a good fix I can do with the limited medical supplies I have but lets get it cleaned." Naki pulled out her medical kit and began working on Endesa's wound. Cannon and Asau helped Shan out of his chair and to his hooves.

A quiet humming was coming from outside the control room. Ryau and Asau grabbed their weapons and took each side of the door way. They silently communicated and simultaneously spun into the door and aimed their weapons at the target. Marissa floated in the air escorted by three Sentinel Majors.

"Oh good, you survived," Marissa said. "I'm sorry I was unable to slow your decent before impact."

Ryau and Asau lowered their weapons. "We have one injury that can't be treated with our medical supplies." Ryau said.

"You are in luck, we're close to the others and there is an old medical lab inside." Marissa said. "Are they moveable?"

"Yes, it's her arm thats injured." Ryau turned into what was left of the control room. "Everyone, it's time to go."

"Very well. Getting Endesa's arm in a sling." Naki called from inside. A few moments later the others left the control room. Naki glanced at Marissa and then to the mountain they faced. "How long is the walk?"

"Not long, our facility is just up the mountain in front of us." Marissa said. "Let us go." Snow drifted down into the lights from their armor and the Sentinels as they hiked up the mountain side. The snow worsened and became thicker. "I'm sorry, the environmental systems that kept the weather in check, malfunctioned forty centuries ago."

"That seems to be another reoccurring theme across Forerunner installations." Naki said. They reached the top of the mountain and looked down into a canyon filled with structures.

"Here we are, this was meant to house my mother's science teams but it never served its full potential." Marissa lead them down to a door way extending into the snow. "We'll take care of your injured friends before I take you to the others. This way." She flew down a few levels with the others in tow and came to room lined with medical pods. "All you need to do is place them in the pods and the procedure will begin."

Ryau and Naki helped Endesa into a clean pod and shut the lid. The small window fogged up and the medical pod began its work. "How long with this take?" Ryau asked.

"It should take less than an hour. Although this machine hasn't operated in a hundred centuries. I apologize for any errors it makes."

"What type of errors would it make?" Ryau glanced at the machine, wondering if he should regret putting Endesa in there.

"Bruising, small cuts here and there, skin tone and eye color changes and maybe height altering. The machine uses similar technology to the device you are wearing." Marissa said. "And as I said it hasn't operated in a hundred centuries. There might be glitches."

"Hmm, it might have been better to know that before hand." Ryau said.

"I'm sorry. Now, follow me to the others." Marissa hovered off down a hallway. Ryau ordered Asau to stay behind with Endesa and followed Marissa to another section of the canyon facility. The walls were lined with conduits and pipes branching off to rooms. They crossed over a sky bridge between walls of the canyon. The floor of the canyon was a small lake that was dammed at one end. Naki walked up to a door and peeked inside of one of the small windows. The room was barren except for the plant life that had entered through a broken floor plate.

Marissa lead them into a large room, UNSC equipment was scattered around on tables and racks. A Warthog and surprisingly a Pelican sat by a large door. Ryau and the others walked in to about the center and waited for Marissa to say something.

Before she could, two Spartans shoved Shotguns in Ryau and Naki's faces. "Marissa, why the Hell did you bring these three here!?" Shouted a voice belonging to an Army Pilot behind a table with his own gun up.

"This is SpecOps Major Ryau Cinotee and his team, they say the war is over." Marissa said. "They came here with a Corporal Cannon."

Cannon came through the door way and shouted. "Don't shoot, the war is over! We won!"

"Then why are these Elites here?" The Pilot asked.

"A lot happened in the final year of the war. We were lied to since the beginning and betrayed by our leaders. We split from the Covenant and joined forces with Humans and defeated the crumbling Covenant. This was a joint mission." Ryau said. "And there's a reason that I was chosen for this. Brad, Lindsey, please lower your weapons. Don't shoot your old team leader."

The two Spartans exchanged glances and lowered their weapons slightly. "Our old team leader is missing, disappeared three years ago." The female Spartan said through her helmet speakers.

"Well, I am Nick Ex-UNSC Spartan one zero two." Ryau pressed the human button on his device but he was met with a low pitched beep.

"Damn, oh yeah it broke." Ryau muttered.

"What the Hell are you trying to pull?!" The Spartan shouted.

"He is telling the truth, Major Cinotee is what he identified himself as. His DNA tests from earlier confirms that. Though the levels of Human DNA are low, indicating that he has been in this form for over three years." Marissa chimed in.

"What...how is that even possible?" The Spartans lowered their weapons and relaxed in their stance.

Ryau sat down in a chair and told them his story. They thought it was complete bull-shit at first but thanks to Marissa's DNA scans and Naki's video on the end of the war, they started to believe him. "So now I'm here representing the Sangheili."

"Umm well... that's quite strange." The Pilot at the table said.

"Yes, quite strange. In fact it's so strange that it can't be made up on the spot, even with an AI." The male Spartan said. An army Gunnery Sargent and a private entered the room carrying a bag of fruit. "Hey Eric, the war's over!" The Pilot said.

"Well that's great news, and judging by your reaction our species wasn't annihilated." Eric said. He glanced over at Ryau and the others. "Oh hello."

"Sargent," Ryau nodded. Sargent Green and Private Green were brought up to speed on their situation and they brought Ryau and his team were told what the Sargent's group had been through. "Well where's this Sangheili that you have with you?"

"Ryka, come on in here." Sargent Green called down a hallway. "He chose to sleep separate from the rest of us by himself."

"R-ryka?" Naki muttered to herself.

A male Sangheili in an old scratched and battered suit of armor came from down the hallway. "What is it Green?" Ryka stopped and looked past Ryau. "Naki... is that you?"

"Y-yes father, it's me." Naki said "Its been so long."

"Yes it has." Ryka gave his daughter a hug. "I never thought I'd see you again. You seem so much younger than I last saw you."

"Umm blame that on a Forerunner device." She informed Ryka of the status of the war and what the information was going around this small group.

"The end of that war is great news, and this science experiment... that you turned a human, a Spartan at that, into a Sangheili, that is quite interesting." Ryka said.

"I would like you to meet that ex-Spartan. Father this is SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee." Naki introduced Ryau standing next to her.

"It is a pleasure to finally meet you sir." Ryau said.

"You stand like a Sangheili, you speak like a Sangheili, I presume you fight like one of us. If it were not for my Daughter's story I would have never guessed that you had been Human." Ryka walked around Ryau, looking him over.

"Um Thank you sir." Ryau said.

Ryka turned to look at Marissa."It seems that now we may have a large enough force to assault the Evil ones prison camp."

"I do not know, last time we attempted something like that, we lost one of the Reclaimers. I do not recommend we attempt another as long as Jeaso has control of two Sentinel production facilities. I suggest that..." Marissa was interrupted by Sargent Green.

"Not now, this group looks like shit. Lets give them time to rest before we go on anymore suicide missions." Green said.

"We did just fall out of the cloud layer on a Gondola then walk a few kilometers to get here." Naki said.

"Damn and you're still standing? You Sangheili are even tougher than I thought, and I know you are tough." The Pilot interjected.

"Well follow me fellow Sangheili, I'll show you to your resting areas." Ryka took them down the corridor he had come from and showed them to some rooms he had decorated with pieces of an old Phantom. Ryau deactivated his shields and sat on a small bed made of dried pine needles.

"Hmm, not bad for a bed of pine needles." Ryau said, glancing over at Naki on the other side of the room.

"Yes it is, and it seems that my Father did his best to replicate the interior of a Battle Cruiser." Naki said, lying down on her bed. "But, I'll be getting that rest the Sargent mentioned now."

**September 6, 2555 000 hours
>Standard IV
Classified ONI Research Lab
>[ExCovenant] Tech Kala 'Velamn
**

* * *

><p>Kala followed Foss and the others through the hallway of the mysterious Human facility. The glass was shattered and bullet casings littered the ground. "It looks as if there was some sort of combat here. But that seemed very unlikely when we first entered this facility." Kala said.<p>

"Thanks for pointing out the obvious- wait, are you saying there might be another way down here?" Dosh said.

"Yes, Corporal that is what I mean." Kala glanced at chair that had been thrown through a window.

"Excellent deduction miss," Foss said. "Williams, stay back here and check the system files for anything that may be a secondary exit."

"Understood sir." Williams broke off and moved to a computer on the wall. "I'll catch up with you if I find anything"

Something metal hit the ground a few meters down the hallway. Lee took point and they headed father into the labs. "We're going to need to find a power relay system and bring the other systems back online." Kala said.

Lee pointed to a sign on the wall that was labeled _Sub Station 4. _"Just up ahead."

Dosh and Lee secured the room. The only systems that were not online were the main lights and the mainframe. Kala flipped the switches and the lights across the facility hummed to life. Occasionally a light exploded from over load. "Your systems are so simple. Very easy to use," Kala said.

"Alright, lets find out whatever happened to this place." Foss said. They headed through the hallways again. One of the break off corridors had collapsed and what remained of an Unggoy arm stuck out from underneath. "Well looks like the Covenant did find another way down here..."

Dosh glanced into a communications alcove. "Sir, we've got some Special forces bodies over here. Looks like they got cornered."

"Yeah it does, but we know they were fighting some covenant. Now if we find anything that has to do with who ran this place call give me a call. We need figure out what forerunner thing this place was studying and if it can help us find the Major and the others."

They fanned out forward into an area filled with offices and and files. "Looks like whoever ran this place liked to keep their records backed up, I mean look at all this paper." Lee said as he looked over the room. Kala watched as he pulled a file out of the Personnel cabinet. "Sir, personnel files. Lots of scientists and plenty of ONI spooks but their records are blacked out." He handed it to Sargent Foss.

"Here's one for a Lieutenant Colonel Hartford. Fancy that, the man that brought us all here was in charge of this facility." Foss said as he read through what was readable in the file.

The radio cracked and Williams came over it. _"Sir, I've found an old service tunnel that used to lead to the spaceport."_

"Well that should have been sealed off when they detonated a HAVOC bomb there, but that explains how the Covenant bastards got down here." Foss said.

Dosh picked up a satchel from one of the Special Forces Troopers. "Sir these were Demo packs and they've got flamethrowers. My guess that this was a torch and burn but they got ambushed before they could detonate."

"Yes Corporal, I see many more of those on the walls down this hallway." Kala said peering down into the darkness of another passage way. "Thought they seem to be inert."

"No way miss, C12 is still highly explosive, even after three years." Dosh said.

"Ah... then we are in a very unstable area." Kala said. She glanced around the walls of the hallway again. Her motion tracker blooped as two weak gray dots moved across the lower portion of her HUD. "Sargent, my motion tracker has picked up a pair of contacts moving this way."

"Williams has anything come by your position at all?" Foss radioed.

_"Negative, I haven't seen anything come down here."_Williams replied.

"Alright, Kala is picking up two contacts heading this way, they've already passed your location." Foss radioed back. "Get your rifle and keep it close-"

Something clattered to the ground down the corridor they had come down. Lee turned around and aimed down beyond the doorway. "Sir, there's a haze seven meters away, it's not clear but it looks like some sort of active camo." Lee whispered.

Kala took cover inside of a cubicle and monitored the situation with her motion tracker. _"They're not Sangheili, far too short." _She thought after catching a glimpse of the haze.

"Ok, I see it." Foss moved up quietly and aimed down the corridor. "UNSC Marines! Identify yourself!" He shouted as he popped out of cover.

"UNSC Special Forces. Stand down Sargent." The figure called out before materializing as a Human in a suit of armor. It's photo-reactive panels shimmered and returned to the armor's default green. Sargent Foss and the others lowered their weapons and stood up.

"Well there's nothing down here really sir." Foss said.

"That depends on what you're looking for." Colonel Hartford stepped out from behind the Special Ops.

* * *

><p>Well another late chapter but here you go. FYI, all measurements will be stated in Metric here on out.<p>

14. Act III Pt 4 Sector 02

This chapter and Act III is dedicated to Elizabeth aka wolfoftheabyss5 who died in a car accident in August.

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act III Part 4

Sector 02

****September 12 2555**

>Massive Forerunner Facility**

>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]****

*** * ***

><p>Ryau woke up in the straw and needle bed and suited back up in his armor. Naki already was armored up and sitting on a chair taken from the cockpit of a Phantom or Spirit.<p>

"Ah you're up." Naki said after she swallowed the Morla roll from her rations. "Endesa came out of the machine fifteen minutes ago, she's all healed up."

"Oh very good, have you heard anything from the others yet?" Ryau asked. He moved into the other chair and ate some of his own food for breakfast.

"They've decided to take us and try to rescue the other Sangheili and other species captured by that other Monitor." Naki said.

"Didn't Marissa say that was a bad idea?"

"She mentioned that it was not in our best interests, but never said that it was too crazy. We should go to the main room with the others." Naki stood from the makeshift table and headed to the door. "Done with breakfast?"

"Yeah I'm done." Ryau put the left over food in his pack and picked his Carbine off the rack. They headed back into the main room. He spotted Ryka sitting on the Pelican, which Ryau now noticed that it was only the cockpit portion and part of the tail.

When Ryka saw them enter the room he hopped off and walked over.

"Major, what is that weapon? It seems different then the one I know."

"Ah, this is a Type-52 B, it's slightly different than the one manufactured at the Iruiru Armory, this was made at the Arica Armory and has a slightly faster fire rate." Ryau pulled the Carbine off his back and handed it to Ryka.

"Hmm constructed during the ninth Age of Reclamation, just a few weeks before the Great Schism according to what you told me. Battle damaged and customized, you've had this longer than a standard weapon." Ryka looked it over pausing at the blue stock.

"Yes, I received it a cycle before the civil war. I've serviced and customized it since then. It has served me very well." Ryau said, taking the Carbine back. "So what is the plan that Naki told me of." He glanced over at the Humans who were loading up a Forerunner style ship that Ryau somehow missed when he first entered the hangar room. It was long and sleek, somewhat resembling a jumbo jet of the twentieth century with the Forerunner design pallet.

Ryka pulled a holographic screen from a slot in the wall. "This is a map of the entire facility. We are here." He pointed to a position on the map. "The Evil one's camp is over here and this is the path we took that ended in disaster." A line appeared on the map. "Now, the Marissa suggests that we travel through green sector and cross around

into the Evil one's sector."

"That path should be more clear than the alternative. We lost a good soldier on the first try. We're not going to lose another." Sargent Green said.

"I see, where is my team?" Ryau asked Naki. Before Naki could answer, Shan and the others walked into the room fully armed and ready to go. "Am I the last to know about this plan? I am the leader of my team, I should be one of the first to know."

Naki punched his shoulder, "You need your sleep, and I am the same rank as you. Relax."

"Fine, it's just that no one tells me we're doing anything until they've already planned it." Ryau sat on a crate. "So next time Ryka, wake me up too."

"Let us hope there will not be a next time as well as another time. But lets get on this transport and get on this mission." Ryka took a Needle Rifle and went aboard with Endesa and the others.

Ryau opened a compartment in the supply crate he was sitting on and Needler ammo canisters rained onto the floor "I'm running low on ammo for my Carbine, they don't have any down here." He checked a few other containers around the room but only found ammo for Needlers and Needle Rifles.

Naki tossed him a Sentinel Beam and shrugged. "I need some too, but take a Sentinel Beam, they're good at taking down shields remember." She said as she boarded the Forerunner drop ship.

Ryau followed her on board and looked into the cock-pit. The Human Pilot from earlier was at the controls. "Can you really fly this thing?"

"Oh yeah, I've been flying it for the past few weeks." The ship lifted off and hit the roof, causing everyone standing to fall over. "Sorry, my fault." The Pilot put his hands in the air defensively. "I'm not good at taking off. But you can't fly one of these since you're an Elite."

"Oh yeah? Move over." Ryau said.

Mike got out of the seat and let Ryau take his the seat. "I doubt that you can fly this, the controls are keyed for Human or Forerunner DNA or something."

"I've got 'or something' in me." Ryau pulled the drop ship out of the hangar and into air above the mountain range. "There we go, we made it out without bumping anything." He got back out of the seat and gave it back to Mike.

"Yeah, yeah. Whatever." Mike took the controls back and flew towards the other sector of the facility where Marissa said that the enemy had not taken control of yet.

Ryau walked back into the back of the Forerunner drop-ship, though it was more of a shuttle in design and features. There were no built in weapons, just the armament from an Enforcer was haphazardly attached

to the exterior. Ryau went into a separate compartment where his Sangheili and Naki's father sat. He walked over and took a seat by Endesa. "How is your arm doing Endesa? That was one of the more painful fractures." Ryau asked.

"It feels just like it did before the injury, if not better." Endesa said. "That machine also healed many other injuries that I sustained during the crash."

"Ah, very good. That pod was a great deal of help it seems." Ryau nodded in agreement. He glanced over to Shan. "Well that's new." Shan's missing arm had been replaced by a forerunner alloy prosthetic arm, probably given by one of the medical machines.

"Oh yes Major. Marissa says that it is made of the same metal she is that allows her to feel." Shan said, flexing his new appendage.

"That's good, I'm pretty sure any replacement arm we could offer you would be nothing compared to that."

"As far as I know we have not reached that level of technology yet." Shan said.

"I don't think we have yet either." Naki commented. The ship could go fast, but Mike kept it slower because they were flying low near tree level to keep off the radar. Less than five minutes after they had taken off they crossed over the massive wall that separates sectors. The area was much more overgrown than the other sector they had just left. Massive trees grew up along the wall and over the mountains while a desert area stretched from the center that was closest to the holographic star.

"If my memory serves me, the keeper of this region kept herself hidden by the-" Marissa couldn't finish what she was saying because something blew the shuttle in half. As parts of the oad shuttle tumbled out of the air, Ryau caught a glimpse of the eye of a massive Guardian Sentinel.

"Hold on!" Ryau sealed the door to the cabin and grabbed hold of a railing. The tail end of the shuttle fell out of the air and slid through the trees, snapping branches and catching leaves. It smashed into the ground and slid into a large river. The air bubble that was created by the sealed cabins kept the tail afloat and it flowed with the current. Ryau pulled himself up, "Everyone alright?" Everyone responded and was okay, they had all taken a hold of something before the crash. Except for Marissa, who's casing was dented. "Marissa, are you okay? You've got a dent."

"Yes I am fine. I slammed into the wall upon impact, though it is just a dent." Marissa said, starting to rise off the floor again. The cabin shook and shifted as the tail bumped against rocks and other objects in the deep river. After a few more minutes, the tail end of the shuttle became embedded into a sandbar in the sectors massive ocean.

When Ryau felt that they had stopped moving, he released himself from the handholds and looked out the window to see water. "I think it's time that we get out of this thing."

"Yes, that is a good idea Major." Ryka recovered his Needle Rifle. "It is a good thing that our weapons do actually have safeties. My Human friends believed that we did not."

Naki keyed open the door and about a meter of water rushed into the room. "Well this is salt water. So we're not in any river anymore." Naki said, she crept out and looked out of the hole in the ship. "We're quite far away off shore. We can make the swim though."

"Lets go then. Everyone out." Ryau grabbed his Carbine and jumped in the water after everyone else. They swam to shore as Marissa hovered above. Ryau stood up in the sand and brushed it off his armor. When he looked up into the foliage a green light looked back at him.

"Hello..." It said.

**September 6, 2555 0306 hours
>Standard IV
Classified ONI Research Lab
>[ExCovenant] Tech Kala 'Velamn
**

* * *

><p>It's been three cycles since Kala was locked in an office by the Special forces that Colonel Hartford had taken down to this mysterious facility. After cycles of pacing around in front of the desk, Kala took a seat and turned on the computer console. The Holographic screen flickered to life and illuminated the room in a bright indigo light. She used the same bypass that she had used to access the console on the surface facility and browsed through the applications on the system. She opened the security camera system and flipped through the cameras that were still operational. One of the cameras showed the two Humans that the Sargent had left at the surface. They were lying motionless in the server room but there was no visible injuries on them. A second screen popped up and displayed the medical signs, from what she could understand, they were still alive.<p>

After a few more screens she came across the rest of the Sargent's squad in the cafeteria on this level. They were just sitting around the tables. Small pop-ups told her that the rooms doors were locked. Just before she had been locked in this room, she had seen the Sargent swing at the Colonel. Something the Colonel had said had really enraged the Sargent.

The next camera showed the Colonel and the Special Forces soldiers down a hallway working in a lab room. None of the active camera feeds showed anything of what they were doing. Getting bored she browsed the files on this terminal, though she couldn't fully understand all of the language said.

"Oh I forgot!." She said to herself and face palmed. Kala pulled a small object from her thigh pocket and plugged the Translator device into an adapter. It was used by the Unggoy in the communications office to decipher Human text communications.

The device did its work and started to convert all the documents into her language. A lot of them were documents and logs working with some sort of teleporter system. She didn't catch it as a Forerunner teleporter system until a file showed a room of Forerunner design.

Kala flipped through other holographic files. It appeared to her that there were multiple expeditions through the teleporter but not every group made it through. There were reports of the convoys being attacked by floating machines in a massive underground structure.

Judging by what she heard from returning warriors that were on patrol in the deep forest, these descriptions were very similar to each other. Other documents stated that the Decommissioned Vehicle Facility and Army Regiment was just a cover for all the resources moving to and from this planet they called Standard IV. The other screen switched and displayed a viewpoint in a massive hangar like area. Schematics made it clear that it was on this level.

Moments after the camera activated, Perimeter Breach flashed across the screen. "Uh oh, that's not good." A mass of the Parasite fell from a hole in the ceiling of the hangar, presumably from the old vehicle lift that had gone to the space port at one time. A pair of auto turrets activated but only had a ten percent charge. Kala watched as the turrets opened fire on the Parasite much like they had on the Covenant years before. One of the other screens changed and displayed the Colonel who was moving out of the lab with a hand gun. The Parasite swarmed the turrets and knocked the large weapons to the floor of the hangar.

Kala got up to the door and tried the door controls but got nothing. She glanced back at the screens and saw the Colonel and Special Forces get into the lift and head to the surface. Now that it was just her and the Sargent's squad she bypassed the door controls. The doors slid open and she crept out into the hallway. She found her way to the cafeteria and opened the doors.

The Humans turned to the doorway. "Kala? What are you doing?" The Sargent said.

"The Colonel and his guards are gone and the Parasite has found this place- we must leave." She said. "Follow me to the weapons."

"That bastard ONI Spook. Okay lets go," the Sargent said.

Kala lead them through the halls of the facility on a map she had downloaded onto her data pad. They came to the armory after a few units, the door was open and it was mostly cleaned out. However there were still a few rifles and shotguns on their racks.

The Sargent and his squad rearmed themselves and Dosh tossed Kala a rifle. "I think we can trust you now." He said.

"Ah, thank you Dosh," Kala loaded the rifle adjusted her grip.

"Alright everyone, Kala says that the Flood have breached the facility. Let's make our way to the tram and get the hell outta here." The Sargent said.

Foss lead them down the hallway, towards the tram room. When they got to the tram station the car was still at the top. "Fuck, we've got up to half an hour until the car gets back here" Williams said.

"We'll hold up here, should-" Glass shattered down the corridor and

everyone turned with their weapons up. A massive parasite form burst through a door and slammed into the wall. "Oh shit!" Everyone opened fire on the beast and it was down within a few moments. Yet more of the Parasite swarmed around the corner.

Kala unloaded the rifle into one of the Parasite's Carrier forms. The form exploded and Infection forms rained about. She ducked behind a computer cart as a Combat form fired its shotgun. The tram car fell rapidly, on an emergency decent. It hit a set of shocks at the bottom and halted.

"Alright everyone on right now!" The Sargent ordered.

"Throwing a firebomb!" Lee yelled and tossed a grenade. Kala recognized it as the Jiralhanae flame grenade from its glowing red middle. The grenade exploded and filled the corridor with flames. The Parasite caught fire and hissed and popped. Kala jumped into the tram and it shot up along its rail.

* * *

><p>AN: Well another chapter, and some new info on the purpose of the DVF and why the Army was on Standard.<p>

15. Act III Pt 5 The Scientist

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act III Part 5

The Scientist

**September 12 2555

>Inside Planet Standard IV
Massive Forerunner Facility

>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]
**

* * *

><p>"Hello..." The green eye said. A moment later a monitor sphere, painted green with some silver accents, floated out from the leaves of the forest. It started to speak in a different language, however Ryau though that his interpreter headset was interpreting it. "It has been quite a while Marissa." The Monitor said. Though it made Ryau a bit confused, it had not done that when the announcement was made in the teleporter station on the surface.

Marissa knew why Ryau was confused. "I can tamper with computer systems, Major. I just updated your mind with our language, it is one of the Device's basic functions. We're not that different. We both know what it is like to be in a new form so suddenly and to not know what to do. " To Ryau it was clear that she had only said that though his headset and not any of the others'. Then she responded to the new Monitor. _"Yes it has, how is my mother doing?"_Marissa said. Ryau glanced over at Naki who was attempting to interpret the conversation for the rest of the group.

_"She is doing fine, she has enjoyed those DNA samples you sent her."_The Green Monitor said.

_"I thought she might. I wish to bring this group to meet her. One of

them actually wears the Original Device." _Marissa placed a way point over Ryau as for the Green Monitor. The way point was visible to Ryau as well over his HUD. The others either didn't notice or could not see it.

_"The Original MFS Device? Your Mother believed it lost to the Flood thousands of years ago." _

_"The Female in the green armor recovered it no more than seven years ago from the planet we left it on."_Marissa put another way point over Naki.

_"What does MFS mean?"_Ryau asked before taking a minor jump back at the fact that he had just spoke in the forerunner language perfectly. Naki and the others were just as surprised.

"Oh dear, there's a side effect of instant language downloads. You probably didn't notice since you did not speak your native language after you were changed the first time." Marissa was referring to the fact that Ryau did not speak English with Naki after the initial experiment with the Device.

_"So how long am I going to be talking like this?"_Ryau asked.

"Roughly five hours. But we will have reached my mother by then and it will be better to communicate with her in our language." Marissa said.

_"And Major, MFS stands for Multifunction Species, basically meant its many applications and the species change ability."_The Green one added in.

_"I understand. Should we get going?"_Ryau asked another question.

"Yes, everyone follow I forty-nine. He will take you to a meeting place, I'll go find the others." Marissa flew off to go find the missing half of the shuttle and left Ryau unable to speak English or Sangheilian for five hours with a Monitor that seems to have forgotten their own name.

_"I forty-nine?"_Ryau asked.

_"Having your memory turned into computer files still leaves it open to corruption, much like a normal memory, and I have been around a long time. I forty-nine was the name of the file that had once contained my name."_I49 said.

_"Ah I see, that makes sense." _Ryau said. They followed the Green Monitor through the jungle for a few kilometers until they came to a clear path in the trees. Something had cut through and removed all the trees but now ferns and grasses grew where they used to be. The monitor flew over and hovered over a mound. They moved over and took a seat on an outcropping. However when they did, it sounded hollow and metallic. Interested, Ryau pulled off some of the vines and found Titanium A armor plates. The mound was an Elephant. _"Naki can you give me a hand?" _

"Can you say it slower so I can understand you?" Naki asked

him.

Ryau repeated himself only slower upon her request then added, _"I think this is an Elephant."_

Naki got off the outcropping that appears to be part of the crawler track assembly and began to help Ryau pull the vines and other plant material off the old vehicle. "How would this massive Human vehicle end up down here?" Naki was just as confused as Ryau was.

Ryau just shrugged and pulled the foliage away from where the vehicles registration number would have been located. Instead of the stylized eagle of the UNSC, the black and gray insignia of the Office of Naval Intelligence greeted him. _"Oh, ONI...figures they would have found their way here."_

"What was ONI doing down here? And how the in the hell did they get these down here." Naki said.

Ryau pulled on the hatch and broke the rusted hinges. _"Wow. This has been here quite a while..."_ Ryau thought to himself. He slipped inside the old vehicle and onto the old grate. Some water dripped from a hole somewhere. A body in a Marine's uniform was against the wall of the cockpit and there were some others in lab coats down in the crew seating. He grabbed a crate and pulled it out into the light. It was worn but definitively one of ONI's. He cracked the case open to find it stacked full of data pads. _"I Forty-nine, if we manage to get out of here, can I lay claim to anything we find down here?" _

_ "I do not see why not. These Erde-Tyrene were attacked by Jeaso but my Guardian Sentinels have kept his forces out of my territory, I am sorry that they miss took your ship."_I49 said.

"You do love collecting miscellaneous things." Naki said, almost understanding what Ryau had just asked. Ryau just chuckled and nodded.

Ryau found some more crates of materials but left them all in the back of the old Elephant. He would come back for the materials later if they ever made it out of here. After a little while of exploring, Ryau found another Elephant further back in the forest. When he got back to the first Elephant, Marissa had returned with Sargent Green and the Spartans.

"Good everyone is here." Marissa said. _"I forty-nine, can you lead us now?"_

_ "Yes, follow me."_ I49 took off through the forest, with Marissa not far behind. They headed through the forest for hours and came to a structure covered in vines and plants. It was in a valley between two large mountains, much like how Marissa's base of operations was set. Ryau could understand what the holographic control panels meant now, Water, lighting, sewer apparently. The corridors lead down deeper into the facility, though some massive vault doors, not unlike the ones in the libraries of the Halo array. _"I can see your awe Major, this is the way I have kept Marissa's mother and myself safe from the attacks of Jeaso." _

_ "I see, those are very large doors. Though I have been wondering,

why have you and Marissa been treating me so much differently than the others?" _Ryau asked, genuinely interested.

_"Your usage of the Device and your experiences with it set you apart from the others. Now that you can speak our language sets you even more apart."_Marissa said. The last door opened to a large hangar like room. A holographic world played across all the walls.

A woman of Forerunner origin was working on a console in the holographic projection. From what he could tell she was actually viewing a scan of Ryau, the armor layer stripped away and set to the side. She pulled up the device from the armor layer and made it larger. _"Major, you broke my device. Again." _

_"Ma'am...?"_Ryau was confused on how she knew that.

"I can see the handy work of a Halo Monitor on the casing. You can call me the Scientist, I am the one that built the MFS Device." She said, she moved the projection to the center of the room. _"The central unit is cracked and the control panel has been destroyed."

—

_"Umm alright, we were involved in a Gondola crash. The impact is what damaged the device. Sorry." _Ryau said.

"Everyone, this is my mother, we were able to keep her alive so long the same way that I was placed into this monitor sphere only into the computer simulation. She was one of the chief scientists that was chosen for the original plan." Marissa said. "This is actually the same simulation that you, Ryau and Naki, visited when you became trapped in the pods." She added.

"It is a pleasure to meet you Scientist." Naki said, which Marissa relayed for her mother.

"Like wise miss Cimutee." The holographic model changed to that of Naki. _"You are a very diverse group of two species. In order for you all to return to your lives, then you must take control of the remaining Teleporter control station in Jeaso's sector. His program he uploaded destroyed the central AI and damaged all teleporter systems beyond repair." _Marissa relayed the Scientists information so that the others could understand what she had said.

"That is actually what we were planning on doing Ma'am." Sargent Green said.

_"Then I suggest you get back to work Green. The Major is the one that I would like to speak with." _She let Marissa relay then she waved her off. Marissa took the all of the others out to another shuttle in another room. _"Major I have made many, many copies of the Device during my existence in this __computer. However, I would offer you a replacement but the version you wear is attuned to you now, your DNA and physiology for example. What I can do is take the device and make a few improvements and repair many damaged functions. Although I am the creator of the Device, it is yours so I ask your permission to do what I have said."_

_"Yes you may, Scientist. Is there anything else?" _Ryau popped the Device out of its place on his forearm and held it in his hand.

"Well, it has nothing to do with you but I've had no one to tell yet. I have managed to make significant repairs to the machine that was to return us to living bodies. Do not tell I forty-nine or my Daughter. I wish to keep this quiet until Jeaso is dealt with." The hologram switched to a pod similar to the ones that he and Naki had become trapped in after they left the teleporter room. _"Place the Device here."_ A pedestal rose from the floor. Ryau set it there and stepped back. _"Repair time estimated at twenty two hours. I will hopefully see you then." _

"It has been an honor meeting you Scientist." Ryau said. He turned and headed out the door that the others had left though. It was a long corridor and he passed several more blast doors that just swung open as he approached them. Ryau shrugged to himself, I49 had needed to access the security controls to open them earlier, but that could just be that he was coming from the other side. He found Naki and Cannon discussing the Scientist. "Well she's going to fix the device." He paused for a second. "Hey, I can speak normal again," Ryau said in English.

"Oh good, but its not like you need to be human anytime soon." Naki rolled her eyes. "But now we don't need Marissa to relay your messages."

"So what are we planning?" He asked.

"We're continuing on the mission for the teleporter control station. Just waiting for you." Sargent Green said, leaning out the door to the shuttle. "Though the green ball has refused to give us any type of escort or support."

"Well, let's get going then." Ryau hopped aboard and met with the rest of his fireteam. Shan, Endesa and Asau were looking over a map that Marissa had provided of the area, while Ryka looked at some pictures of Sanghelios on a data pad Naki gave him. Naki and Cannon came into the hold behind him and Naki noticed something where Ryau's bodysuit was torn.

"Umm, Ryau, did you get injected with anything when we crashed?" She asked.

Ryau turned around and attempted to get a look at what Naki was seeing. "No, I checked. I was fine." He looked down at the interface that the Device hooks in to and saw that there was a small rip where the Device makes contact with the skin. "Oh Gods! Not again!" He literally face palmed.

"No, no its not that, this substance is darker in color but its still glowing." Naki tried to reassure him.

"Its a fluid from the Device, that may have been released in the crash. That's bad news." Ryau countered.

"Fine, we'll ask the Scientist when we get back if nothing happens." Naki said.

"Alright then. Let's get going." Ryau headed towards the cockpit and helped Mike take the Shuttle out of the hangar.

**Who Cares... its around 4 am
>Gods Forsaken Planet
In a tram car attempting to get the hell
away from the Parasite
>[ExCovenant] Tech Kala 'Velamn
**

* * *

><p>Kala gripped the handrail as the g-forces from the trams rapid acceleration held her down on the floor. Lee's firebomb grenade had held the Parasite at bay down in the lab long enough for Williams to rewire the tram's ascension systems. Williams flipped a switch and the tram slowed to a rapid but more acceptable speed. Kala pulled herself off the floor and sat against the wall.<p>

"Well that was fucked up," Dosh spit some blood out of his mouth, he had hit the floor pretty hard. "Hartford just left us down there."

"Just before we got cut off, Connors said something about the Prowler and UNSC transponders. Hartford was hiding something if he stopped them from saying it." Foss said.

"He was hiding this whole secret facility, its something we should know about if we're to look for survivors. Granted there were none down there." Williams added.

Kala remembered one of the camera feeds she had seen. "Your warriors on the surface are still alive Foss. They are locked in one of the server rooms."

"Oh good." Foss gave a sigh of relief. "I'll radio our pickup for a hot extract." Foss went on his radio and received conformation that the extraction was inbound.

The tram stopped in the station behind the 'broken' vending machine. A Parasite carrier form stumble around the corner. "Oh SHIT contact! We're pinned down!" Lee yelled, unloading a clip of his Assault rifle into the bulbous mound of flesh. The Carrier form fell to the ground and explosively burst. Infection forms and rotting flesh dripped from the ceiling. One infection form managed to get through the hail of projectiles and ripped into Dosh's chest. By the time that he screamed the transformation had already begun, there was nothing they could do for him now. Kala kicked the Infection form and it exploded in Dosh's chest. However he was already dead.

"Damn it- Everyone out of here now!" Foss grabbed Dosh's body and kicked another Carrier form that had come around the doorway. "Pelican here in five!"

Kala dashed out into the dinning hall, spraying projectiles into the Parasite on the other side. Williams had grabbed Dosh's Shotgun and unloaded a few shells into a Parasite Tank that had slammed through the tables.

"Williams, Lee get Smith and Connors and get to the doorway, go, go, go" Foss ordered.

The area was a frenzy of gunfire, from her and the humans to the Parasite mob that had come in through the service exit. Bullets and plasma bolts singed the air as Kala ran for the security room. She

got inside and sealed the doorway to the dining hall, trapping the Parasitic monsters in the other room. Williams and Lee ran in from the server room with the unconscious Warriors, everyone was carrying someone but Kala.

"Everyone, Pelican is touching down any minute." Foss ran past her, and she ran out behind the others. The Pelican came overhead, its floodlights show brightly in the court yard outside the communications relay. The Parasite emerged from the treeline and swarmed towards the Pelican.

"We gotta fucking run for it!" Williams yelled.

Kala ran behind Lee and the Pelicans nose guns opened up upon the Parasite. Weapon firer from the monsters took out the floodlights and the Pelican's guns lit up the night like a strobe light. As the others climbed aboard, the Crew chief signaled for the Pelican to lift off, and it did. Kala leaped up and used her Sangheilian height to her advantage. She flew into the troop bay and slammed into the bulkhead on the other side. The Pelican lurched as something heavy jumped onto the wing, but they were still able to take off. Whatever was on the wing flew off as soon as the Pilot hit the thrusters. Kala lifted herself into one of the seats, her pulse began to slow, the constant battle had caused her second heart to start beating faster too.

The Crew chief and a medic were looking over Connors and Smith. "They're fine. Tranquilizers, special forces issued. What did you guys run into/" The medic asked.

"We've discovered Colonel Hartford is a bit of an asshole." Foss said breathing deeply.

"You don't say? He and some of those Spartan threes stole a Pelican without authorization a few hours ago. The Captain was mad, but that's what you get when there's two branches competing for command."

"He's ONI, that means he's an even bigger asshole." Williams threw in.

"Makes a lot of sense now." The medic sighed and patched up a bullet wound that Kala had apparently gotten.

"So how long until Connors or Smith is awake again?" Foss asked.

"I'd give it another hour. Maybe more though."

"Alright, I need to figure out what they were going to tell me."

* * *

><p>Oh look its another part in the same month! Yay! Don't expect this to happen again. This story is now longer than the original... wow<p>

**_The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act IV Part
1_**

The Floodgates Are Open

**September 13 2555
>Inside Planet Standard IV
Massive Forerunner Facility
>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]
**

* * *

><p>Ryau sat beside Naki's sleeping body, it was well after what could be considered midnight down in the facility. He and Spartan 098 were on watch for any of the 'evil ones' patrols. They had crossed into his territory five hours ago and so far Ryau hadn't seen a thing.<p>

Spartan 098, or Brad as Ryau remembered him as, looked over at Ryau. "Is that really you Nick? The great covie killer." He chuckled, sounding uneasy.

"Yeah, its me..." Ryau sighed, sensing the uneasiness.

"We never knew what actually became of you, Captain Brown had us covering evac ops up until that last frigate left. And by the time someone found what was left of the hog, there wasn't anything left. Then you show up down here as an Elite of all things."

"Well you know.. I kinda fell for Naki once I got to know her." Ryau almost forgot to leave out 'again' when he said that. "It started out as 'live to fight another day' but then...yeah." He couldn't tell him the real reason why he stayed with Naki, even after the war.

"You sure its not some type of Stockholm syndrome?"

"Yeah I'm pretty sure. Just when you get to know Sangheili when we're not trying to kill each other, they're not that bad." Ryau said.

"Though there's twenty years of genocide that you need to get passed." Spartan 098 added.

"Not all of them were directly involved in that, the three that I brought with me. I trained them, they're young." Ryau sighed. "Though I have met some that just enjoyed the killing. I distance my self from them."

"So you're a drill Sargent or whatever they call them? He asked.

"Yes, I am, it was the best I could get after-" A floating light hovered around the other side of the shuttle, it wasn't Marissa, she was behind Ryau in some kind of sleep mode. "There is something behind you. I went behind the shuttle."

Spartan 098 turned around and raised his DMR. "Got an ID?"

"Negative, but it was not a ground contact." Ryau slowly crept around the other side of the shuttle. He looked around the other side, the

floating light was connecting into the shuttle with a beam of light. Ryau couldn't get a very good look at the marking on the side so he could not identify what side it was part of. _"Back away from the ship." _Ryau said in the Forerunner language.

The small machine turned and looked at Ryau, severing the connection it had with the shuttle. The explosion tore through the shuttle, ripping it apart. Luckily the others had went to sleep outside the shuttle, and far enough away to be safe from the majority of the blast. Ryau propped himself up and walked over to Spartan 098, where the machine had once floated.

"Well there went our only mode of transportation. Bastard overloaded the weapon systems." Spartan 098 said.

"We need to move. Now." Ryau said. "If he knew we were here, he might send more over here soon."

"Agreed... what happened?" Marissa asked, hovering over.

"One of those damned 'harmless' constructor sentinels overloaded the weapon systems and blew up the shuttle." Ryau took his pack from Naki and started down the hillside. He stopped a few meters away. "Marissa, I have no idea where I'm going," he chuckled.

"Very well, I will lead the way Major." She took off through the trees with the rest of the group following, the normal humans falling behind the Spartans and Sangheili. When they stopped after about twenty kilometers for a break, Marissa outlined her plan. "Once we reach his stronghold and get the prisoners freed, I will call in my Sentinels and wipe out his forces."

"Sounds like a plan." Sargent Green said taking a drink of water. "Can we get a visual on this stronghold of his? I've actually been there but I want to see the thing from above"

"Yes we can, there is a clear line of sight from that cliff right there." Marissa hovered over to a cliff side behind a bank of trees."

"You were there already?" Naki asked.

"Yeah, Ryka and I were let go after we won his game." Green said, walking over to Marissa.

Naki turned over to her father. "What kind of game did he make you do down there?"

"There would be a duel every week, two against two. The winners would be released, however most of the time the combatants would wipe each other out and no one would escape." Ryka looked at the ground. "This is how I lost most of my latch. When Reen first arrived in the facility, it was in time for one of the duels. He and I managed to eliminate the Jiralhanae and Mgalekgolo that was faced against us. The only reason we did not kill each other was the fact that we needed each other to survive."

"I see..." Naki said. "Well I'm glad that you succeeded, Mother will be very glad to hear that you are still alive."

"If we ever take the teleporter out of here that is." Ryka added.

Ryau headed off over to where Sargent Green and Marissa looked towards the facility they were about to assault. The structure was surrounded by a vast desert. Marissa was talking about how Jeaso disregarded environmental duties and this desert grew out of an ancient rainforest. Ryau zoomed in on the facility itself with his visor. Even at full magnification, the facility was just a speck of shining metal. He realized that they had a very, very long walk ahead of them now that the shuttle was destroyed.

"I can see the facility from here?" Sargent Green squinted through a pair of binoculars. "That place has to be over a thousand kilometers away. Its just a speck with these things."

"The trek should take no more than ten days, on foot but if Marissa can find us another transport it will be considerably faster." Ryau said.

"Yes, I believe we could take the Gondola that is located in the wall just over the mountain." Marissa said.

"Alright, that's about fifty kilometers." He looked over at the wall with the binoculars. "We'll be there by tonight." Green said.

"Keep an eye out, Endesa found the arm of a combat form in a tree." Shan called over to the others.

"That means we should get moving again too. If the Flood is near then we have a problem." Ryau suggested.

"Yes, let us continue." Marissa said before floating off once again.

"God would it kill you to fly a little slower once in a while." Mike complained as they hiked through the forest. Marissa did not stop, nor slow down to reply to the Pilots plea. Ryau was actually enjoying the run through the forest, so was Naki and the rest of the Sangheili. Ryau chuckled a bit, to his left were the Spartans and two his right was Naki and the Sangheili. His old fireteam from when he was human, and his new Sangheili latch, all running together towards the same goal.

The trees began to thicken and become more dense as they descended to the lower altitudes. Ferns and other vegetation made it more difficult to run so they began to slow down. Ryau lost visual sight of Marissa but she remained a NAV-marker just ahead of them. Even the Spartans and his squad had become winded and started to slow but Ryau remained as fast as ever, he found it strange. Then Ryau remembered that fluid that had made its way into him earlier.

"Hey Marissa... Could we slow down? I've got a question and the others might need another break." He called out.

_"Yes Major, there's a clearing up ahead." _She said over the radio.
_"We'll stop up here." _

"Alright, understood." Ryau came to a stop in the clearing and slammed his head into Marissa's casing. Luckily he was wearing his

helmet. He landed on the ground and removed his helmet. He rubbed the top of his head. "Ow..."

"Yes, that did hurt." Marissa said.

"Well after I handed the device over to your mother for repairs, I noticed a dark blue glowing fluid was flowing into my body." Ryau popped off his forearm guard and showed her the spot that remained glowing. "Any idea what it was?"

"Let me do a scan." A small beam of light shot from her eye and struck the glowing spot, Ryau felt a slight tingling and then it went away. "Scans indicate that it increased your strength and your stamina. Similar to that used on your Reclaimers, though you received a low dose."

"Well that's just great." Ryau said sarcastically. "I think other Sangheili will look down on this."

"It does not seem to be very noticeable." Marissa tried to reassure him.

"I out ran a Spartan Marissa, that's very noticeable. Hell I think I'm taller too." Ryau sat on a rock and waited for the others to show up.

"I am sorry Major, but there is nothing I can do now. Rest assured that there are no negative side effects." She floated around him examining the growth and changes from the fluid. "I will have a word with my mother when I get the chance."

Naki and the others finally arrived and took a break on a log. The Spartans stood around and also seemed to rest, though Ryau knew Spartans could last a lot longer on less sleep. "You've gotten faster Major." Spartan A204 said. She depolarized her visor and took a drink of water through the helmet's intake.

"Yes you have." Naki added, she seemed to understand what that fluid had done now, noticing he was quite a few centimeters taller than before and there slightly better definition under his body suit.

They rested there for less than an hour, before the holographic sun began to dim. They headed out once again towards the wall and gondola system. Halfway down the back side of the mountain, a loud screech sounded through the mountains from the barrier. A swarm of infection forms crawled by Ryau and his latch on top of a massive boulder. "Alright, the Flood are here, Marissa says that this is one of the most compromised areas so seal up your armor and let's get through this." Ryau said. He popped his mouth piece in and it clicked into place. They jumped down off the rock and met up with the Humans who had taken shelter on top of another rock. Their faces were covered in cloth, the best they could do with the lack of resources here.

They headed through the thickening forest and the greenish mist that formed across the ground. Soon the trees began to die off, choked by the poison atmosphere created by the flood. When they approached the entrance to the barrier, biomass covered portions of the wall cultivator pods pulsed. "Gods, this infestation has really escalated." Naki said. "Do you think that there could be a Gravemind

stage here?"

"Oh..no. I never thought about that." Marissa stopped, her light flickered. "That would be the worst case scenario. But we should discuss this later. On the gondola."

"She's right." Ryau said. "We need to get through this place quickly."

A trio of Sangheili Combat forms jumped down from a pile of biomass that once was a tree. The combat forms charged at the Spartans who charged towards the Flood in return. The two Spartans jammed their rifles into the chests of the combat forms, popping the infection forms inside. More Flood forms jumped down from the wall surface. "Go, go, go! Get to the tunnels!" Spartan 098 said. Ryau and sent the others and Marissa leading the way into the access tunnel. Ryau covered the Spartans retreat as they fell back through the doorway.

Marissa sealed the door behind them and Ryau turned around looked around the room they had entered. More biomass was formed on the walls and some tentacles draped from the ceiling. "I have a feeling that we just entered a worse place than before." Ryau said.

****The Humans say its September 15****th**** and around noon******

>Still on this Gods Forsaken Planet
A human base in a mountain

>[ExCovenant] Tech Kala 'Velamn
**

* * *

><p>Kala sat on a crate in the hangar as the Sargent talked with the man they called Captain Brown. When Connors and Smith finally woke up a few days ago, they spoke of the Human identity transponders on the disabled Battle cruiser and no derbies from a Prowler that as said to have been destroyed here. Colonel Hartford never came back, Williams believes that he had another secret facility to clean out.<p>

The base's intercom buzzed and the Captain made an interesting announcement. _"With the restoration of the comm relay we've sent a distress message aimed towards Earth and our new found allies, the Elites. In time we hope that there will be a response and rescue soon." _

Kala heard cheer rise through the base. Most of the personnel here has been stranded on this planet for three cycles, she was too. The Super Carrier's long range communication array was destroyed beyond repair when the ship crash landed and the short range array would have made it to the fleet around the time that Ryau said the Great Schism began so it would have been useless.

Suddenly the ground trembled and dust fell from the ceiling. Alarms began to sound. Kala's radio scanner picked up security traffic
"_Perimeter sentries respond!" _

"_Plasma bombardment! There's a trio of wraiths in sector seven."
_They responded.

_"I thought that bastard said that we had a truce." _The voice from

the Command center said.

_"Negative, we've got Flood in the main tunnel! They're breaching though, we need backup!" _Another voice shouted over the channel. _"We've lost Charlie and Alpha." _

_"Gamma fall back to the motor pool and seal the door. All perimeter squads do the same and seal all doorways. Do not let anything get down to the civilian levels." _

Kala ran for the blast door as it began to shut. But before she could reach the other side, the doors slammed together trapping her and a few others outside.

"Aw shit!" Shouted one of the technicians. He banged on the door. "We're fucked!"

Kala grabbed an Assault rifle off a weapons crate and headed for the hangar's control room. The two officers were attempting to override the door controls. The five combat forms fell from opening. The soldiers on the floor deck fired on the combat forms and cut them down. The officers managed to get the hangar's upper doors shut and the blast door open again. "Okay everyone out. Now!" one smashed the controls to prevent the parasite from opening it after it was sealed again.

She slid down the railing and dashed for the door. The ground shook again and the upper doors started to melt. Metal beams collapsed and chunks of wall collapsed. Kala slid down through the opening. The Parasite had managed to get Wraiths to the top of the base and were firing at the door. The officers sealed the door and ran for the command center. A fireteam ran over to reinforce this position.

"Is there anything I can do sir?" Kala asked the best she could.

"Get over to the civies elevator, don't let the Flood down there," The Sargent of that fireteam said. "Sargent Foss is on that duty." She pointed down a hallway.

"I see." Kala said and ran the way she had pointed. The structure shook and people ran, so far there was no gunfire. She ran into the Sargent and William.

"Kala, glad you could join us, looks like the Flood finally organized." Sargent Foss said. "We need to make sure the civilians stay safe, Williams, Kala, go to the elevator control and guard that section, Lee and I will stay here and Connors and Smith take hallway B."

"Got it sir." Williams took Kala down the hall and into a room marked as what she thought was _Lift Control. _Williams took a seat and looked over the controls and monitors. "Sir we've got auto turrets on the Motor Pool level, old ones, twenty-five-twenty-nine models."

_"Copy that, I'll run it by the Captain." _ There was a pause as Sargent Foss contacted the Captain on a channel Kala wasn't scanning. _"He gave the go ahead, Gamma pulled out of the motor pool half an hour ago." _

"Got it, bringing them online now." Williams punched some keys and a red light flashed on. "Alright, no one head up there."

Kala felt the ground shake once again. There was a terrible roar that spread throughout the base. The roar was organic, not something from a structure, she could hear the wetness and groaning in it. "By the Gods, what is that!" She yelled over the roar.

17. Act IV Pt 2 Survivors

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act IV Part 2

__**Survivors**__

**September 13 2555 2049 hours

>Inside Planet Standard IV
Forerunner Service Tunnels/ Flood Hive

>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]
**

* * *

><p>Ryau and his latch crept though the muck and puss that made up the floor in this bio-mass covered service tunnel. He was glad that their masks filtered out the smell but felt bad for the humans, who only had a rag over their faces. What smell that did make it though the filters was horrible. Shan slipped on a identical and fell into a pool. Ryau grabbed his shield harness and pulled him up.<p>

"Gods! Its all over me." Shan smeared the flesh and fluids off his armor.

"Keep quiet." Ryau whispered and hit him lightly on the side of his head. "The Parasite can hear Shan."

"Sorry Major." Shan found his footing again and headed off with the others. The Spartans had point behind Marissa, with Ryau in the back. So far there haven't been any Flood wandering the corridors, which Ryau found strange. The incubator pods pulsed with growing infection forms, they were careful not to bump into them and cause them to pop.

They came to an open trench, the tunnel where the Gondola should be. The tunnel was void of any Flood forms. "I will go check on the Gondola system." Marissa flew off in to a service vent, leaving them on the ledge, very much like a stereotypical Monitor. There was a loud creak and something heavy dropped to the floor. A few moments later, Marissa hovered back over on top of a Gondola. "There was a pillar that had collapsed across the path."

"Very well." Ryau hopped aboard the Gondola and found a stash of auto turrets in a supply container. "If I deploy these, will they fire on us?"

Marissa hovered over and zapped each one with a beam and looked up. "They will now only fire on the signals emitted by Jeaso's Sentinels and the genetic structure of the Flood."

"Good." Ryau activated one and placed it on the corner of the Gondola. The Spartans and the Humans set up behind the walls in case anything jumped out at them. Shan and Asau took positions around the Gondola's control room. The Gondola lurched and started rapidly down the corridor. Far down they tunnel the Gondola lurched as the lower or upper strut hit something and caused it to hit the side wall.

"What the Hell was that?" the female army trooper said.

"Flood tentacles, massive. I think we do have a Gravemind down here." Naki said, she was becoming concerned. "If this infection is too advanced...we may never make it off this planet."

"We'll get off, the Flood is not a micro organism. We can get out of here." Ryau said.

"ONI might not allow that... unless there's a way to secure a landing zone, they wont land a ship here." Spartan A204 said.

"There is a way, my mother made quite a lot of devices that could help in securing an area." Marissa said. "If we manage to eliminate Jeaso, we can set up on the surface."

"Sounds good...gods..." Ryau looked where they were arriving now. The platforms and corridors that lined the interior of the barrier wall were gone, smashed and crumpled, all that was left was an empty shell of the wall covered in bio-mass. The Gondola continued to hover though the open space as if the tunnel was all together. A large mound stood in the center of the hole, tentacles spread around its base and up the walls. "I think we found the Gravemind." Ryau whispered.

Either it didn't see them pass over, it was occupied with something else or it didn't care about them at all, they passed into the other tunnel without incident. Everyone gave a sigh of relief, even Marissa had virtually held her breath. "We're going to come back and take that thing out soon." Sargent Green said. "Right?"

"Of course. We can not allow the Flood to continue to exist. Ryau, remember that cleansing barrier that Jeaso activated in the Apex lab? This facility has a much larger one that will cleanse the entire facility. He does not have control of it right now, my mother managed to lock him out of it for now." Marissa said.

"Then that is something we must do before we get out of here. How thorough is it?" Ryau asked.

"It will wipe any trace of organic material from this facility." Marissa said. "There will be nothing left except for the dirt and rocks.."

"Damn that is thorough." Spartan A204 said from her position behind a wall.

"Do you know when the infection arrived on this planet? I mean, they weren't here before Humanity settled on the surface," Naki asked anyone who knew. The humans shrugged, none of them have had contact with the surface for three years.

"Converting to the Human calendar I would say it was in February of twenty-five-fifty-three. Surface sensors indicated that a ship crash landed in the planet's ocean around that time." Marissa said.

"I'm just trying to figure something out, but Flood can not use the teleportation system right?" Naki asked.

"No, not unless the system is triggered for them."

"So unless the flood managed to find one of two relays and Jeaso purposely brought them down here, they found another way in." Naki concluded.

"The glass was smashed where we came in, up in a hangar." Corporal Green, Sargent Green's wife, said. Ryau knew that the Army wouldn't normally allow this because of a conflict of interests, but this war was full of exceptions.

"That was from water pressure. And there was not a Flood breach in my sector." Marissa said. "Oh...my memory may be failing, there could be a maintenance shaft that leads to the surface, somehow my people built this place down here."

"And you never told us this, why?" Sargent Green said.

"I am over one hundred thousand of your years old Sargent. I-forty-nine doesn't even remember his own name, I don't remember next to nothing of the planet that I grew up on or my father, it's probably nothing but desolate ruins now and he is dead." Marissa's eye flashed red slightly. "I know you're constructs die after seven years. Even our construct break down after time, and that is all I am now. A construct." Marissa snapped at him.

Ryau gripped onto a railing as the Gondola began to pick up speed. Marissa noticed and slowed it down again. However the active repulsion engines on the bottom caused much stress on the damaged gondola tunnel, a beam from above snapped and smashed into the Gondola. The lower strut of the Gondola slammed into the floor of the tunnel causing it to tip over.

"Hold on!" Spartan 098 yelled."

Marissa's sphere hit the roof of the Gondola's cab as it flipped. Ryau braced himself against a pillar and dropped to the ground after the car settled. Naki and the other Sangheili were fine, so were the Humans. Marissa moved out of the cab. "I'm sorry... that was unexpected." She said.

"It is fine, we are unhurt." Ryka said. "Please continue showing us the way."

As they continued down the lower level of the tunnel, Ryau noticed that Asau had a limp. Asau was the only one of his new latch that had not gotten severely injured yet. "Asau, are you alright?" He asked.

"Yes, just a twisted ankle." She said. "I can handle it."

"Good." Ryau followed the group.

The Flood fog began to clear and a large blast door closed behind them. "That should keep the Flood off our backs for a little while." Marissa said. The Humans removed the cloth from their faces.

"Still doesn't smell any better here." Mike said.

Marissa ignored his comment and went over to a lift. "We are now will inside Jeaso's desert. This lift will take us down to ground level."

"What are we waiting for?" Sargent Green moved on to the platform. "Let's go end this." The Sargent's wife grabbed his arm and pulled him back off the platform.

"You idiot, the lift is coming down." Seconds later the lift settled on the platform.

"Safety feature, we didn't want anyone falling down the shaft." Marissa floated into a box on the lift.

Everyone crowded on to lift and it headed down through the inner working of the wall. Below the Gondola tunnel there was a nicely decorated glass tunnel following along the route of the tunnel above. "What's that?" Naki asked.

"That is the foot tunnel." Marissa asked. "Hasn't been used in millennia "

"So we have been walking around and fighting in your maintenance tunnels." Naki said with a nervous laugh. The lift suddenly lurched and stopped for a moment. "What was that?"

"I do not know..." Marissa replied. Then the lift continued downward. They could hear the wind blowing as they arrived at the specified level. Piles of sand accumulated in the corners and all over the floor.

They followed the wind to a doorway that appeared similar to the one they used to enter the tunnels, only it was half filled with hot sand. It was a nice temperature for Ryau, similar to the summers in Zelso, though the Humans were bothered a bit from the heat. He stepped out into the bright sand, the holographic star shining brightly above the Apex lab. Ancient dead tree trunks lay partially submerged in the sea of sand. According to Marissa, this used to be a lush rainforest until the water systems shut down over four centuries ago.

"Sure wish we had a hog, or some other sort of transport. Wouldn't matter if it could see us, we stick out like a sore thumb already." Mike groaned.

"We don't, now shut up." Sargent Green said. "How far are we from the objective?"

Marissa hovered higher above the dunes to look into the distance. "Roughly a kilometer left."

"Hasn't he got any patrols?" Spartan A204 said.

"Yes, they've sighted us and reported us. He has this sector heavily

surveyed." Marissa said. "We will wait for nightfall, I will then mask our thermal signature." He will be blind to us then."

"Have you been doing that the entire time?" Ryau asked.

"Yes, but hiding thermals does not help prevent actual visual contact." Marissa responded. "It would get very dark here, perfect for sneaking towards his base of operation."

"Alright then, let's post the Spartans on the dune and we'll rotate lookouts until nightfall." Ryau said, he stuck a light stick in the sand so they could send survivors out if they found any. The Spartans nodded and took their posts, falling back into the mode they had when Ryau used to be their leader. The holographic sun began to dim and transition into the moon phase, which then faded out of existence as well.

"Okay, lets move." Ryau pointed towards the structure bordering the sand and remaining forest. A trio of Super Sentinels patrolled up above the deserts surface. Ryau took notice of many lights sticking out just above the sand around the perimeter of the structure.

Marissa tracked his eyes to the flashing lights. "Guardian towers, in place to keep whatever he captured in, not keeping us out." She said. "We do need to worry about the Guardian Sentinels." As she said that a massive shape emerged from the sand a few hundred meters away. Searchlights on its hull activated and it flew off in the other direction in a standard search pattern.

They moved quickly across the sand, avoiding the Sentinel's search lights and small sensor nodes that glowed a bright purple in Ryau's night vision. Strangely there wasn't any resistance or high tech defenses. Ryka was walking out front of the group. He slammed into nothingness with a dull thump. He took a step back and looked at the air in front of him.

"Oh...it has a shield." Ryka said. "That may explain why there have not been many defenses."

"Ah, let me just adjust the frequency." Marissa said and a moment later there was a faint shimmering as the shield deactivated. They ran the final few hundred meters and took shelter along the wall. Marissa sighed behind them. "I can not follow you in there, I need to attend to the Flood infection and my fleet of Sentinels."

"Very well ma'am." Sargent Green said. "Find us that way out of here if we can't restore the transport system."

"I will Sargent." Marissa said before flying off towards the Apex Labs.

The Humans and Spartans broke off and headed around to the other side of the wall the made up the facility's perimeter. Guardian towers didn't pick them up coming in so Ryau figured either they were offline or they only fired on things leaving the compound. The entire area reminded Ryau of the Halo game map he and Naki had played on the moment that they were sucked into this universe, Sandbox. The door to they had formed up on silently slid open and Endesa and Asau made sure the room was clear.

The door had opened to a long hallway stained in blood. Not of one species but of the Covenant and Human.

"Gods... what happened here." Endesa muttered.

"They've either tried to escape or he just killed them all..." Shan said. "Might have been both..."

"There aren't any bodies, either he wanted to keep an unused hallway clean or he had whoever was left clean it up for their own sake." Naki said as they crept down the corridor. "Maybe he gives them proper burials."

"When I was here, the loser of the fight would receive a warrior's funeral. Even if he tortured and killed us, he allowed us to follow our traditions." Ryka said.

"So he's not so insane after all..." Shan said with a hump. They headed through the facilities halls, attempting to find a way into the facilities lower levels.

They came into a dark room and the lights flickered on, momentarily blinding their night vision. As the flash cleared Ryau saw groups of Sangheili and other species of the Covenant sleeping along the walls and all over the floor.

"Should we wake them?" Asau whispered.

"Yes, if we don't make it out some how, at least other may." Ryau said. "Well... here it goes. Everyone wake up!" The piles of soldiers jumped up but then remained facing down, probably assuming that Ryau was Jeaso. "No time for that, get up." Now they looked confused, a few Sangheili took a glance up at him. Ryau took off his helmet and motioned for the door. "You need to leave now." With the removal of his helmet, the Sangheili and others stood up.

One in a battered set of Fieldmaster armor stood taller than the rest. "Who are you?"

"SpecOps Major Ryau Cinotee, now follow the doorways to the desert and go to the flashing light in the dunes. We're getting everyone out."

"My latch, and many others are in other sections of this facility. He has done horrors to us." The Fieldmaster sighed. "Do not forget about them."

"We won't now go." Ryau pointed out the doorway. As they ran by there was the general talk of how they hoped that this wasn't a trick by the evil one and another popular conversation was about how they believed they were actually in Hell and Ryau was a warrior of the Gods sent to rescue them. He counted about seventy Sangheili, Unggoy and Kig 'Yar in the file that left.

"Alright, let's move further down." Ryau said. Down the next hall was a ramp that went down a few meters. A trio of standard Sentinels flew out of the doorway and opened fire. Naki rolled behind a power conduit and Ryau opened fire from his position behind the door. His captured Sentinel beam burned through the first Sentinel's armor and

caused it's core to explode. Endesa threw a plasma grenade and it vaporized the other two.

"They definitely know we're in here now." Naki said..

The periodic terminal on the wall flashed red and showed images of Sentinels and a line of text that said "_Weapon discharge, Sentries inbound." _

They breached another room at the bottom of the ramp that was full of more Covenant members. However these were all awake and watching a Monitor hovering by a small hatch on the wall. Ryau could guess that that was Jeaso. Jeaso was talking to them "Some one has come for you, yet you will not -"

Ryau fired the remaining rounds in his Carbine into the Monitor's Eye. He knew that it wouldn't do much damage but the metal was slightly different than the type that 343 Guilty Spark was made of. The eye cracked and sparks flew out of the casing. Jeaso's eye glowed and fired a powerful blast at Ryau, throwing him against the wall outside the door. Jeaso fired a few more blasts into the crowd and disappeared through the hatch. Asau and Endesa moved ran into the room and started helping the hurt and wounded out of the room. Ryau stood up and his radio cracked.

"_Major, Sargent- run!...has...porta...omposer...Get out of there!"_Her message was garbled by the layers of Forerunner metal above, but Ryau understood the meaning.

"Endesa, Asau. Get out of that room now!" Ryau shouted. A glowing barrier of orange and red light emerged from the wall and moved rapidly across the room. Asau tripped over a discarded helmet and slammed onto the ground. She screamed as the barrier crossed over her lower body and destroyed everything it touched. Her body breaking up into glowing squares and then they too disappearing. She reached up for help and Endesa reached back, but it was too late. She was gone, only a smoldering set of armor and ash remained. Ryau grabbed Endesa to prevent her from sharing the same fate as the glowing hot barrier continued its advance. Others in the room burned and broke down as they made contact with the barrier, unable to escape.

Ryau threw Endesa over his shoulder as she was too shocked to loose her life long friend in such a painful way. They sprinted towards the doorway they had entered. The corridor became smaller as they barrier emerged from the walls on all levels. Shan's remaining arm slid across the surface and burned away before he could correct his path. Everyone they had freed was running towards the same location, the flashing beacon Ryau had placed less than an hour before. The deadly barrier halted at the doorway and Ryau set Endesa down on the sand. Shan's mandibles were clenched tight what remained of his arm glowed white hot.

"By the Gods! What was that!?" Naki shouted. "Asau...she's gone."

"_Did you all get out?! What happened?"_Marissa came frantically over the radio.

"What did he have! We lost Asau!" Ryau was disturbed. That was too close for anyone in there.

"_He took the portable Composer. A less advanced version of the pods you and Naki were in."_Marissa still sounded worried.

That gave Ryau a little hope that Asau was still around. "So she's still alive? And that looked nothing like a pod. It was like the cleansing barrier he activated in the Apex lab!" Ryau sent her the helmet cam data that was automatically recorded.

"_She has been converted basically into a construct. If we ever manage to repair that machine that was to restore us, then she may be recoverable... and he must have combined the two."_ Marissa stopped for a moment. "_Sargent are you there? Did you make it out in time."

—

There was a burst of static on the other end. "_Yes we did, all accounted for. We located and freed a group of civies and believe it or not, a Gã'ta. They say it was an Elite at one time, some how."

—

"_He's been tampering with that prototype... Major, my mother made another prototype of the MFS Device when she first arrived here to improve upon, but it was stolen centuries ago. What is Gã'ta?"_Marissa said.

"_Its a large creature that was native to the planet Reach, I've got no idea how this guy got a hold of a DNA sample." _

"_I don't know... fall back to the dune, I'll redirect a gondola to pick you and the survivors up. I've sent in my Sentinels to take out his."_ As Marissa said that, thousands of lights came into focus in the sky and descended on Jeaso's Sentinel factories and his stronghold. "_I've dedicated all my forces to this, I only hope that it'll be enough."_

Ryau sighed and took off his helmet. They had only rescued a few of the rooms in the stronghold and lost a friend who may or may not be recoverable. Endesa had calmed down, hearing that Asau might still be alive made her feel a bit better. Ryau sat down in the sand and checked up his suits power reserves. This mission was too much for his recruits, though the entire reason he chose them to come along was because this was supposed to be a diplomatic rescue mission, something to get them out into the universe.

A female Sangheili from one of the rescued rooms came over to Ryau. "Thank you brother, the evil one said that you were coming for us but you would never make it in time." She bowed her head a bit. "The Gods have blessed your hooves with swiftness as you do your holy duty."

Ryau didn't tell her how right she was with the Gods blessing, after The Scientist injected that fluid into him before taking the device. He nodded and stood back up. There were a few cries of panic from the wary prisoners as a detachment of Jeaso's Sentinels emerged from the sand a few hundred meters away. Through they were quickly distracted as a large group of Marissa's flew in and attacked. Ryka seemed to find a few Sangheili that he knew and was talking to them as Sargent Green returned with his group of humans. The Covenant survivors went quiet when they saw the massive creature behind the group.

The Gondola floated from above and settled onto the ground, its lower strut forcing its way deep into the sand. They filed the survivors on board and hopped on themselves. Everyone's mood had improved after they learned that Asau was still alive, though it was not as good as it could be as she was in a computer somewhere.

"When do we go get her back?" Endesa asked after they took off again.

"Soon" Ryau said. "Once we get these people to safety and rearmed, we're going back."

"Good." Endesa said.

"I'm going to need another arm..." Shan muttered.

* * *

><p>AU: New chapter on time, winding down to a close. Will Marissa's Sentinel Air Force be able to counter Jeaso's larger one? Will they get Asau back? Who knows. (I do)<p>

18. Act IV Pt 3 Asau

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act IV Part 3

__**Asau**__

**September 14 2555 2200 hours
>Inside Planet Standard IV
Forerunner Science lab
>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]
**

* * *

><p>Ryau sat on the edge of the Gondola and searched his pack for any remaining Carbine cartridges, but it was empty. "Gods damn it... Does anyone see a spare Needle Rifle?" He called out.<p>

"Over here brother." One of the rescued Sangheili said. He was standing by a crate eating his meal with a single Needle Rifle sitting on its hook.

"Thank you Minor." Ryau said as he took the Needle Rifle from the crate.

Now that they had gotten all the survivors to Marissa's base of operations, the facility was packed. A majority of the females that they found imprisoned in Jeaso's base were former members of the Super Carrier's oddly large medical staff. However a few had been males, victims of Jeaso's genetic tampering.

There was a rumble as the GÃ°ta they had recovered sat down in a corner of the hangar, by the pieces of Pelican. The GÃ°ta was in fact an ex-Sangheili and was forced in to that form by Jeaso. He seemed to retain his mind and was attempting to talk to another Sangheili. Once the Device was fully repaired, Ryau planned on returning the GÃ°ta to its Sangheili form.

Ryka was taking in all the Covenant members to his wing of the facility and had made sure they were all fed and assigned a room. Sargent Green did the same with the human survivors in an unprepared wing, it seemed he did not expect there to be such a large amount of Humans captured down in this facility. . However after they were fed, everyone mingled together. They all had been imprisoned in the same place and kept together for almost three years and had seemed to work out their differences.

He walked over to Naki where she was taking the names of the survivors. "Where did they all come from?"

Naki looked down the list on the data-pad. "Most came from the _Glorious Retribution_ as we thought. However some claim to be Humans and some of the Humans claim to be former members of the Covenant. Some of Humans say they came down here years ago, by finding a teleporter station but most say they were herded by 'flying drones' into caves after the Covenant invaded."

"Huh, and did we find that girl they were talking about back at the camp? Kamma I think." Ryau asked.

Naki scrolled though again. "No...I don't think so." She sighed.

A Warrior that was waiting in line stepped up. "I am Zemo Carrahn... Kamma is my niece. Are you saying she is here?"

"We overheard gossip about her disappearing with a scout team when we were at the _Glorious Retribution_. I just want to be sure." Ryau said.

"I see." Zemo looked down. "I know I should not know, but I believe she may be my daughter. I...I would like to know if she is."

"We'll see if we can find her." Ryau said. "And Zemo, move to Moram or Zelso if you want to know your offspring."

"Thank you Major. If we make it off this gods forsaken planet, I will. " Zemo left to go get some food from Ryka.

Shan walked out of the main corridor, both of his arm were the cool, sliver forerunner metal. He met up with Endesa and Corporal Cannon and took a seat on a human cargo crate. Endesa came over to Ryau. "Ryau. We need to go back and rescue Asau right now! Before she gets deleted or something!"

"Gods, she's right. Marissa, we need to go back now." Ryau demanded.

"...Yes, I will queue up a Gondola immediately." Marissa hovered over to a console and quickly went to work. "I am sorry, it has been a very long time since I have been this active."

The Gondola docked in a room and a bridge extended on to the Gondola. "It's alright, let's go right now." Ryau hopped up from behind the table. He grabbed the Needle Rifle and ran for the Gondola.

Naki followed right behind him after she apologized to those that she didn't get to in line. She grabbed a few of the storage drives they had gotten from the _Glorious Retribution_. _"If she's in AI format,

then we'll have to transfer her."

"Exactly, lets go." The Gondola launched out of the hangar and went for Jeaso's sector. Sentinels continued to battle it out in the skies above. Ryau and Naki checked over the storage drives and made sure they were formatted for AI storage and recovery.

"We can get at least twenty AI's in storage on one of these. And this..." Naki held up an empty data core. "This is for Asau. It will be compatible with the device when we get it back."

"Alright." Ryau took it and placed it in one of his pockets.

The Gondola settled onto the sand outside of the gully that they had camped out in the night before. Ryau hopped off and put a few rounds into a Sentinel Major that was on patrol. The sand was still hot from the day before and the sentinel battle raged ahead. Heavy pieces of Forerunner alloy fell from the sky and slammed into the sand with a dull thump. "Be careful. Make sure your helmets are on." Ryau said. Ryau activated the thermal blocker that Marissa gave them and they moved into the line of sight Jeaso's forces had.

They rushed through the entrance and down the ramp to the lower levels. "The terminal should be four __levels bellow you. It appears to be active." _Marissa radioed down to them. Running down the ramp, the compound seemed strangely inactive as it should have been.

"Can you get a read of how many Sentinels there are between us and the terminal?" Ryau asked.

_"Negative. The shield blocks deep scanning," _Marissa said. "Alright, thanks for trying." He placed his hand on a door control and it slid open. This room had been spared from Jeaso's cleaning composer beam. Two dead clones of female Sangheili were restrained to a table on either side of the room. Beside them were AIs who were just sitting and holding their legs close to their bodies. The AI's representation were identical to the bodies beside them. Nor were they holographic, they were solid. Some form of hardlight, like what Forerunners used for some bridges.

"Excuse me?" Ryau said quickly.

The AI females looked up at him. One stood up and spoke sadly. "Have you come for us...? The Oracle...it said that everything would be fine... b-but we were...burned away before we could refuse." Her form flickered and jittered. "We woke up as this..."

"I'm sorry. But there is nothing we can do right now." Naki said as she hooked up one of the storage drives into an open port. "Can you see the drive I just plugged in?" She asked. The female looked around at her feet. There were a few control panels and some other items floating around.

"I think I do. What do you want me to do?" The female asked.

"Transfer yourself, and your friend onto the drive. We're getting you out of here." Naki said.

"Thank you. Thank you." She tapped her toe into the port and she and

her friend were sucked in to the storage drive as if they were made of elastic. The drive beeped and a light flashed to indicate it was active.

Naki removed the drive from the console and put it in her pack. "They should be fine, as long as the drives are not damaged."

"Good, let us keep heading down." Ryau opened another door and revealed the next set of ramps heading downward. The Sentinel launchers on the wall hummed and four Sentinel majors flew out of the launchers. Ryau crouched down behind the door jam, it was a good thing their only enemy was a bunch of flying robots. If they had been ground troops they wouldn't be so easy to detect they make a very particular noise. Also Sentinels were historically not the best fighters in the Forerunner arsenal. Ryau waved Endesa over and gave her the signal to throw a grenade.

She nodded and tossed a Plasma grenade down the shaft. The Plasma adhered to the top boom of the closest Sentinel and detonated in the group. Two of the Sentinel Majors survived the blast but their shields had gone down. Shan leaned out beside Endesa and fired the odd weapon in his hands. Small, red, needle like projectiles shot out and exploded when they made contact with the Sentinels as they fired back. Ryau recognized its ammunition as the same type that one of the large Enforcer Sentinels would use. Shan's weapon made quick work of the remaining Sentinel Majors and they moved quickly down the ramp. Naki stopped at the Sentinel launcher and placed a primed plasma grenade inside the compartment.

The grenade detonated and blew the launched to pieces. "It would not be ideal if they could teleport behind us." Naki said.

"That is true." Ryau opened the next door into the next set of rooms. It was the floor that was supposed to house the terminal that contained the victims of modified cleansing beam. "Okay, I can read and speak Forerunner, and you can read some and operate their networks fully Naki." Ryau scanned the room. "Let's get Asau back. The room was oddly void of Sentinel launchers and other exits.

They moved into the room in the standard crouched Sangheili combat stance and set his pack down next to a terminal Naki had already begun setting up at. He scanned the area and was satisfied that the room was clear. Ryau pulled the storage drives from their packs and handed them to Naki who plugged them into the ports. "Ryau, you start searching the database to see if you can find our stored teammate." Naki said. "I'll work on getting everything set up."

"On it." Ryau accessed the database and started to navigate his way through the system. "Endesa, Shan, take out any Sentinels and launchers that you find on this level." Ryau tossed them his Plasma grenades.

"Got it." Endesa said. They moved out of the room and into the main ramp room.

"Well I think I found her, well part of her," Ryau brought the file up to the screen. "It's just her memories... and here's her personality matrix"

"Gods damn him. She's been fractured. I can stitch her back together

but it'll take more time than I had hoped. And there is her appearance." Naki tapped a file icon with a Sangheili body shape on it, and the same wording as the other Asau files. "Put them in the drive and we'll do the work after we get out of here."

"Way ahead of you Naki." Ryau had already moved the files to the drive icon. He disconnected the drive and plugged another in. "I'm going to find the others that should be in here."

"Save time, just download it all. We do not want to miss part of one." Naki said.

"Alright, doing that." Ryau moved the contents of the terminal into the storage drives in a system dump. The download was taking a while and was flowing at normal speed for that massive amount of data.

"Major, we have movement coming from the lower levels. Steps, they sound heavy," _Shan said over the radio.

"Understood, fall back to me, we're getting out of here before we're cut off." Ryau said. The download finished and the storage drive beeped. Ryau disconnected the drive and placed the many drives into their packs. He tossed it to Naki and slung his across his back. Endesa and Shan made it back to the room and stayed by the doorway. The ground rumbled and something slammed into the building. "Out, lets go right now."

They sprinted out of the facility and into the hot desert. One of the massive Guardian Sentinels that Marissa had sent as escort was cracked in half over the top of the building. A mass of Flood Pure forms were ripping the machine apart from the inside. One of the massive Flood tentacles burst from beneath the sand and slammed down, crushing the Gondola. Ryau stopped his run and fired at a charging Combat form. "Never mind, fall back, fall back!"

* * *

><p>au: Short chapter, this has been in progress since November but with school and everything I've decided to just post it now.<p>

19. Act IV Pt 4 Prometheans

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act IV Part 4

**P****rometheans**

**September 15 2555 00:34 hours
>Inside Planet Standard IV
Forerunner Science lab
>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]
**

* * *

><p>"Get back inside!" Ryau yelled. He slid around the doorway and Naki hit the door lock, locking down the facility to the Flood outside. The small door slid together with a click. "Gods... there went our way out of here." Ryau said. Endesa and Shan moved into

position to cover the door and the hall they had originally come from. He switched over to the broader radio channel. "Marissa, we lost our Gondola. The Flood is out in full force."<p>

"__I can see that. And I-forty-nine has decided to get into the fray! His Sentinels should be splitting between Jeaso's Forces and the Flood." _Marissa said._ "___But I hope its not in vein." _

Ryau looked out the small window in the door. The Flood Pure forms were still tearing down Jeaso's defenses, but a few of them were scaling the wall to the inner courtyard. "Do you have a way out other than the front door?"

"__Well, if you're contacting me from the inside ...the... I'll ...can..." _The connection phased out and was replaced by static.

"Damn it." Ryau turned to Naki. "Naki can you bring the shields down again from that console?"

"Yes I can." She went right to work but stopped when she opened the shield control. "Umm the shields are not online..." Naki went through her COM system looking for somewhere the jamming could be coming from. "Something else is blocking transmissions deeper into the facility."

"Gods... move back down the stairwell. Let's find this jammer, " Ryau said.

They moved downward, further into the structure. At the bottom of the first ramp, a red glow reflected off the polished floor. Ryau waved for the others to stop, and he crept foreword on his own. He raised his Needle Rifle and crouched to get a look past the top of the hall. A massive metal, bipedal creature was marching up towards the ramp. It was silver gray alloy, but its shell was more organically contoured than standard Forerunner designs. It saw Ryau crouching down and opened fire with a weapon imbedded in its right arm.

Ryau didn't have any room to maneuver in this hallway. Red crystalline projectiles, the same kind that Shan and the Enforcer Sentinels used, bounced off his shields and drained them rapidly. His shield bar started beeping and one red crystalline shard ripped through his body suit, gel oozed out and numbed the wound. Others dented and scratched his armor. Ryau winced but took the opportunity, the Machine had to reload.

He jumped up and slammed himself into the creature, pushing it back. Ryau opened fire point blank, his needles disappeared into the creatures shields, dispersing into tiny shards of crystalline shrapnel. There was no visible damage or drop of its power. He kicked the creature low on its leg. It stumbled back down the hallway and Ryau tossed a grenade out just far enough to only effect the machine. It detonated and the plasma washed over the creature, however it only downed the shields.

Ryau ran forward with a slight limp and jammed his energy dagger into the machines head assembly, knocking it to the ground. The creature slumped and sparks shot out of the armored shell. Ryau hopped off and and it seemed to vaporize much like Asau had when she was digitized. He gave this level a quick look. "Alright, its clear. Come on

down."

The others walked down the ramp and into the next hall. Naki eyed Ryau's damaged armor, then the seemingly empty area. "What happened to you?"

"I don't know, some bipedal Sentinel machine." Ryau said. "Heavily armed, strong shields. I haven't seen anything like it before."

Naki nodded slowly, understanding what he meant. It was something he had never seen even when they were playing Halo so many years ago, something new.

"Where'd it go, Major?" Shan asked. "I'm not seeing any remains but the weapon." He picked up the gun and scavenged for ammunition.

"It disintegrated completely, Like what happened to Asau." Ryau said. "It's shields just blew apart the needle without having it explode. Let's hope that there aren't many here."

"Then we should move fast." Shan said. "Get in and out as soon as we possibly can."

"That is exactly what I was thinking." Ryau said, he waved down the hall. "Let's move."

The hall went deeper into the facility, Ryau recognized this area from where they lost Asau. They moved down another ramp and now into uncharted territory. Behind them a door silently hissed shut, the sounds of the angry Flood was drowned out by the eerie hum of Forerunner technology.

There was a dull thumping, identical to the sound that they heard before the first creature showed up at the bottom of the ramp. "It must be one of the machines operating the jammer. Could explain why it didn't come up on the system search." Naki said.

Ryau nodded and then moved down the hall. He glanced through the small windows on the doors. The rooms were bare of any furniture or machinery, but piles of ash and charred sets of armor were scattered across the floor. The remains of victims that were now saved on the storage drives in Naki and Ryau's packs. Shan and Endesa moved in an escort position beside Naki.

They went down a switchback ramp just past the computer core room and found a door. The door was heavier and had no windows. It resembled the doors of the Ark's interior structures. A holographic control panel blinked into existence as Ryau approached it. "Naki, behind me. Shan and Endesa get on the other side. Do not fire until I do." Ryau moved against the wall next to the control panel.

Ryau pressed the open button as soon as Shan and Endesa were in position. The door slid open to reveal a massive room. A few of the bipedal sentinels that Ryau had fought earlier were walking to teleportation pads or retrieving ammunition for their weapons from a machine on the wall. Sentinels flew out of a sentinel launcher like machine and attached themselves to the back of the creatures before they headed through another set of black teleporter pads. Some damaged ones were rapidly repaired as their armor pulsed in a orange

glow.

"This must be a repair and refit center." Naki theorized in a whisper. "For Jeaso's forces."

Ryau glanced around the room, his HUD began to get static when he looked over a creature with glowing orange spines that seemed to resemble a COM unit, standing in the corner, not moving at all. None of them noticed the open door and Ryau pointed out the supposed jammer. "Right there in the back of the room. We need to get past them all to take it out."

"We could sneak down that center trench. It would bring us in range to take it out" Shan said.

"Yes, however they are much stronger than a sentinel. I would liken it to a fair bit weaker than Mgalekgolo but not down to our level." Ryau said. "But if we can shut this system down after the current wave leaves and before the next one arrives."

"That sounds like a plan, I can see about shutting down this teleporter system down from the computer core room." She pulled out a spool of small optical cable. "Unfortunately we have to use this as our comm systems are down. Send a pulse through when you're ready."

"Alright, Endesa you go with her. Shan, we're going to sneak across in that trench and arm every grenade we have and throw them at it. Do you have any extra grenades?" Ryau asked them.

Endesa and Naki handed Ryau and Shan their spare grenades. There were still some leftover from taking out the sentinel launchers. Naki connected the optical cable to Ryau's helmet, right beside the slot of where the helmet and the neural lace would meet. He connected the other end into her helmet. It was weird looking, but effective. Naki moved back up the ramp, carrying the spool with her. Ryau hopped into the trench with Shan. They ran down the trench, the room was as long as all of the facility above them. The machines across bridges above them, but they didn't look down thankfully.

Ryau and Shan got into position at the end of the trench. The jammer machine was just against the wall above them. Ryau watched as the first next wave to arrive and pinged Naki to shut the system down. A small light above the pads winked off. As soon as the other group left, Ryau pinged again and those lights went off as well. "Alright Shan." Ryau took the grenades off their clips. "On the count of three."

Shan nodded and Ryau began to count down. When he hit zero, he and Shan lit their grenades and tossed them over the lip of the trench. Ryau stuck his head up over the top of the trench and saw the machine covered in glowing spheres. It roared, the helmet splitting down the middle revealing a glowing red skull. The grenades detonated and engulfed the creature in blue flame. The blast knocked Ryau back down into the trench, the heat overloaded his suits environmental systems and the gel layer's internal temperature reached critical levels. A moment later the system cooled and his shield system recharged.

"We were too close..." Shan said with a quick laugh. He was on his back against the wall beside Ryau.

"Yeah..." Ryau stood up and climbed out of the trench. There was a smoldering crater in the Forerunner alloy where the creature had stood. "Marissa, we think we took out the jammer, are you receiving?" Ryau said over the radio.

"__Yes Ryau, I am. Things are not going well here. The Flood have gotten past all our forces and are attacking here. I've had to release my Prometheans. Have you encountered his?"_

"Yes, we have. It would have been nice to know that they existed. It was a bit of a surprise here." Ryau complained. He now knew what to call these new creatures, Prometheans.

"__I am sorry. I did not tell you about mine as Jeaso believed my Promethean assembly facility disabled. If you were captured by Jeaso or the Flood, then I didn't want my secrets exposed." _Marissa replied.

"Uhg... Fine, do you have a way out for us?" Ryau helped Shan stand up.

"__If your ally, Naki. In the Core room can breach Jeaso's security and transfer teleporter network control to my network, I can redirect them to my facility." _Marissa said.

"Naki, did you hear that?"

"__Yes Ryau. I'm on it, give me a few minutes." _Naki replied.

The comm line blinked off and Ryau looked Shan over. He was visibly relaxed, and looking over his robotic arms. They were dented, scratched and singed, but he pressed a button and a blue wave passed over them, when it cleared they looked good as new.

"Ryau, I'm going to need help making a story up for these." Shan said. "Loosing them to two different barriers is not an honorable thing, and doesn't paint me as, how the humans say, a bad ass."

"Well, these Promethean things have a sword like blade attached to their left arm. A plausible story would be that you got into hand to hand combat with one." He suggested.

"How did I live then?" Shan said with a young chuckle.

"Okay, then you kicked it down a shaft and it took your arms with it. Unfortunately for you, the official report will contain the truth."

Shan shrugged. "I like it and well, no one reads the official report."

"I've got to write it for a reason. But whatever you think." Ryau said and climbed out of the trench. Above the Sentinel launchers also remained dormant. Naki must have shut them down as well. Shan pulled himself out as well.

Marissa came back over the radio. "__Alright! I've got control of the entire teleportation system over the facility. Rerouting those

pads to my facility. We could use your help."_

"Very well. We've retrieved all we found and are ready to go back." Ryau said. Naki came down and nodded. They moved onto the black pads and Marissa activated the system. There was a whine and a flash of darkness.

The reappeared on a black pad in the large room. The piece of Pelican had been moved to make room for a cafeteria for all the survivors. "Welcome back." Ryka met them at the pad and helped Naki off the floor.

"Thank you Father." Naki said.

Ryau crouched up and leaned against the wall, a bit of blood mixed with gel oozed out of his wound. "Could I get some medical help?" The gel layers numbing feeling was wearing off..

Naki looked back at Ryau and saw the wound. "Oh Ryau, what happened?" She pulled a medical kit from her back and knelt by him.

"I caught a round when I went against one of Jeaso's Prometheans. I think it just went through." Ryau winced.

"You took on one of those Prometheans? By yourself?! Gods. I cant believe you're still alive." Ryka blurted out. "You must be one great warrior."

Naki went to work on Ryau's injury. He winced as she cleaned the wound of the gel from the suit and fill the torn hole with an application of cross-species Bio-foam. Then she sealed the wound with a bandage. "Alright, you're patched up. Get rest and stay in bed for the next few weeks. Doctors orders." Naki said sarcastically.

"Not until after we get out of here," Ryau gave a half laugh. "Ryka, what's our status here?"

"Marissa's Prometheans and Reen's troopers are holding the line along facilities sub-level. The parasite breached in earlier last night. The doors were sealed before they made it through though and we didn't loose any of the survivors from the Evil one's base."

"But my Promethean guard will not be able allow the us to evacuate the facility. With this level of infection." Marissa flew in through an open door. "And if we're unable to make it out then we can't activate the cleansing system and destroy the Gravemind."

"What about Jeaso? Why have we just stopped caring about him?" Ryau asked.

"Because the Flood has chosen this moment to strike and they've breached our defenses. Even he seems to understand the threat the Flood is posing now." Marissa said.

"Verywell, thats understandable. Did you get the quarantine walls from the Scientist yet?"

"Yes, they're ready to deploy when we get to the surface." Marissa nodded over to a pile of rods bundled together near the back end of the hangar.

"Well then all we need to do is find a way out. You have teleporter controls now right? Can't we escape via the Apex Lab teleporter station?" Naki chimed in.

"Yes. But it is the issue of getting there." Marissa said. "The Apex Lab is eight hundred kilometers from here, and my last gondola was crushed by the Flood."

"What about the teleporter?"

"That may work... I will send you and your team through to make sure its secure before we evacuate." Marissa said. "Oh and Major, my Mother says that the Device is fully repaired. If you'd like, I can teleport you over to retrieve it."

Ryau pulled himself up and moved back onto the teleporter pad. "Alright, send me over. See you in a few Naki." Marissa activated the pad over her network and Ryau reappeared in the Scientist's lab.

A Hardlight avatar of herself appeared as he stepped off the pad. "_Welcome back Major. I see you have a fresh injury to add to your many scars_." She spoke to him in Forerunner.

"_Yes... I ran into one of those Prometheans._" Ryau said, switching over as well.

The Scientist stopped for a moment but then continued walking. "_The repairs to the MSF Device are complete. As are the upgrades._" _She waved her hand and a display appeared listing the new things added to the device. _"___It now has a fully holographic interface, now it will be more difficult to crack. A shield can be activated by pressing the button labeled SHIELD in the corner._"

She handed it to Ryau and he clicked it into place. Its silver gray finish flashed and changed to the glossy black finish of his armor. It blended in perfectly with his armor. When he waved his hand over it, a holographic display appeared. It looked the similar to the old one but now there were other window that showed up as he swiped over a bar. Two of the notable pages were a Bio monitor that was much better than his HUD variant, and the other was an AI interface and editor command.

"_Very nice, Ma'am._" _Ryau reached behind him and took the data crystal that held Asau out of the bag. _"___One of my team was captured by Jeaso. She was broken down to different files, can you piece her back together?"_

The scientist took the crystal from him it dimmed. _"___Doing that now. Unfortunately the recreation device is still under repairs. I had to reconstruct parts of it from scratch._"

"As long as she will return to the land of the organic. That's fine."

Ryau said.

She handed Ryau back the crystal . _"___Good as new. You can just press the crystal to the device and it'll transfer._" _And that's what he did. The crystal dimmed as Asau was transferred on to the

Device.

A moment later a small hardlight form of her appeared hovering just off the device, wearing her body suit. "Hello Sir. How may I assist you today?" She spoke in a rather simple tone.

"Asau, Are you alright?" Ryau asked.

"__Yes sir, I am running at optimal capacity." _She smiled and replied in the forerunner language.

Ryau turned to the Scientist. "What's wrong? She's not acting normally."

However Asau snickered. "I am alright Major, I already freaked out and got over it as soon as the Scientist fixed me and told me what happened." Her form shifted and became somewhat more reminiscent of Naki. "And this Device's options are interesting, you could edit anything about me... But I guess I'll just turn myself off until you need me..." She returned to her former shape and winked off.

"_Uhm. What just happened?_" Ryau asked the Scientist.

"__As you know, AI's can think much faster than organics can. As she said, she 'freaked out' and got over the change in the period of time that it took for me to download her back into the storage crystal and for you to transfer her into the Device." _The Scientist explained. _"__Now she has shut herself down and when you bring her back online it will be as if no time has passed."_

"Very well then... Is there anything else Ma'am?"

Ryau absentmindedly rubbed his wrist.

"__Actually there is something, Major. Would you like a Neural lace?" _The Scientist asked. She walked over to a table and picked up a small holographic chip.

"__Perhaps another time, Ma'am. We need to continue our mission, Marissa was saying much time." _Ryau said. _"__If you could send me back to base, that would be nice."_

"_Oh nonsense. I can have you out of here within the hour_" She said.

"__Why would I need a Neural interface now?" _Ryau sighed.

"__You don't, but you may need it later." _The Scientist said.

"_Fine... lets get it over with." _Ryau sat down on the operating table.

* * *

><p>AN: Well its delivered four months later than the last chapter, Hope you enjoy. Dont know when I'll be able to update again, college is a pain.<p>

20. Act IV Pt 5 To Freedom (or Not)

(Note: all references to calling the place they are in 'the Facility', is being changed to the Installation since it just makes more sense as the larger area.)

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act IV Part 4

**To Freedom! (or Not)**

**September 15 2555 0305hrs
>Inside Planet Standard IV
Domain of The Scientist
>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]
**

* * *

><p>The Scientist motioned Ryau towards a spot in an alcove, and an operating table appeared out of thin air. More of the forerunner hard light materialized from projectors that lined the wall as pedestals and tables in the small alcove. "Please lie down, back to the table." She said.

"It doesn't look very comfortable." Ryau commented, staying in the Forerunner language for the Scientists ease. He hopped up and laid back.

"It will in a moment, just lie still." Immediately, the table below him shifted and formed to fit his physiology. _"Does that feel better, Major?"_ She asked.

"Yes, thank you ma'am." Ryau looked up and around at the room's ceiling, the only thing he could see at the moment.

The Scientist's semi-solid glowing form went to work on the back of his head, and she told him a little about the massive installation they were in. _"This structure was to be one of this Sector's medical centers. Back when it was designed as one of the Didact's prototype Shield Worlds."_ The Scientist said.

Ryau was vaguely aware of a tingling sensation on the back of his skull. _"I thought that Shield Worlds were hollow planets and entirely artificial."_ He said. _"But this is far from that."_

"I said prototype, did I not? There were many designs and ideas for the construction of Shield Worlds. This one was meant to be like a chain, linked across the planets sub-surface. However this variant was thrown out before it was finished; actually constructing the planet was found to be much more practical." She paused for a moment and Ryau felt a click in his head. _"This installation sat abandoned for ten thousand years before the project, that caused you and the others to be trapped down here, took over. It's amazing that the local wildlife and fauna survived without direct action."

>

>"Hmâ€| good to know, I never thought that I would be talking to a Forerunner about, well really, anything. When this is all over, you and Naki should chat." Ryau said.

The clicking stopped for a moment. _"Yesâ€| we should."_ The Scientist said hesitantly.

"Is there a problem?" Ryau asked. If she made a mistake while working in his head, that would diffidently not be good for him.

"No, Iâ€¦ It is just that... I suppose you could say Naki holds my imprint. I never thought that I would ever meet anyone that held it."

"What do you mean by 'holding your imprint'?" Ryau asked.

"She has part if me in her, like a memory or such. Likely why she became a Scientist." The Scientist said. _"You don't need to worry; all it does is help her understand some knowledge. However, enough about that, I need you to be asleep for the next part of the operation."

>

>"Very well, put me under." Ryau said.

"This should only take an hour." She said before Ryau started to drift off to a deep, dreamless sleep.

His mind remained dark until a flash of light from the back of his mind brought him back. His eyes fluttered open and saw that he was now sitting upright, the operating table had formed into a chair. The Scientist's avatar glow was nowhere to be seen. _"Hello?"_ Ryau called into the cavernous chamber.

The reply came from inside his head. _"I am here. Making sure it linked properly. I had to clean out what remained of the Human neural lace that was rooted in your brain before I could insert mine."_ The Scientist said.

"Are you in my head?" Ryau asked. _"I'm not sure I like someone actually going in without my permission."

>

>"Basically, yes. I am in your head. I could read your mind and I can communicate with you without actually saying anything physically. However, I will withdraw." The essence in the back of his mind faded and her avatar re-appeared at his side.

"So, what can I do with this?" He asked her.

_"You can house an Ancilla, or a fellow organic that was transferred into one like your friend Asau. You'll be able to interface directly with most star ship class command systems and bypass any genetic locks on Forerunner technology."

>

>"That seems very useful, thank you. How long have I been away from the others?" He asked.

_"Approximately two standard hours. My daughter has requested you return as soon as possible." _

"Well am I clear to leave now?" Ryau glanced about the room.

_"Yes." _She walked over to the black pads. _"Just step on as usual, but now just think of where you want to go."_

"Alright,"

he got off the chair and stood on one of the pads. He thought of the hangar in Marissa's base. There was a flash and he stood in the back corner of the structure. A black painted Promethean stood in front of him. It slowly turned around and stared at him.

He jumped back and fumbled for his sidearm. Ryau was about to pull the trigger when someone pushed his weapon out of the way. "Ryau, wait! Those are not Jeaso's." Naki said.

Ryau relaxed and put the small Forerunner pistol back on his thigh. "Okayâ€¦ good."

"Well welcome back." She put her hands on her hips. "You fare well?"

"Of course I did." He said with a chuckle and showed her the Device. "Almost a complete upgradeâ€¦ and she reassembled Asau."

He pressed the AI access icon and Asau appeared, sitting with her legs dangling off the edge of the device. "You called sir?"

"Asauâ€¦ are you alright?" Naki asked.

"Yes ma'am I am," Asau said.

"You seem oddly fine with being reduced to an AI." Naki said.

"That is the same reaction that Ryau had when I was reactivated." Asau replied. "I simply already got over my situation, and there is no use in complaining until I am able to return to myself. I honestly cannot wait until then."

"Well neither can we." Shan and Endesa had walked over and looked very relieved to see their friend in one piece.

Ryau downloaded Asau back into the data crystal and placed her in a portable holographic projector that he and Naki had swiped from the _Glorious Retribution. _"Don't drop her." He handed her to Shan. "Naki, can you follow me?" She nodded and he took her to another room and he removed his helmet, showing Naki the Neural lace the Scientist installed. "She added that."

"Hmm, Neural lace. Smaller than the Humans., by far." Naki said. "What can it do?"

"Basically the same functions of a human one, but more powerful. I should be able to control ship systems and use any genetically locked Forerunner tech." Ryau said.

"Great, that will help us in the future." She said with a sigh and poked the small metal tab on the back of his skull. Naki leaned on his shoulder and hugged him from behind. She pressed their faces together, something she had not done since they left Sanghelios. She spoke in a quiet voice. "Speaking of the future, we're almost out of here. When we get home, we should make the commitment"

She was talking about marriage, they had been talking about it over their dinners for the past year, but he wasn't thinking that it would

be so soon. "Hmm, maybe. You need to wait for me to get a ring." He said to her. "Then I'll need to find the right time."

"That better be a promise." She giggled. She closed her eyes and quietly purred against his cheek .

"Major, the time is come, we must clear the Apex Labs." Marissa came hovering into the room.

"Alright, let's go." He started to stand up and Naki leaned off. He placed his helmet back on his head and checked the seals, even though he would not be able to use the air tight feature with the hole in his side. Naki did the same.

"Back to work I guess." Naki said.

Back in the Hangar, Marissa had gathered all the survivors from Jeaso's compound. Humans, Sangheili, Kig 'yar and Unggoy. Even some Jiralhanae and Mgalekgolo stood in the center. The Gã°ta stood in the back of the group. Someone had made armor for it from the back half of the Pelican in their spare time. Marissa hovered over them and informed everyone of the plan.

>"The Major and his team are going to infiltrate and secure the Apex lab so that we can activate access to the surface teleporters. Once that is done, Sargent Green and his forces are going to escort you to the labs. Major Cinotee is not going to be there when you arrive, he will be on the surface securing that area as well. Understood?" The crowd nodded and the word understood was heard in many different languages. "Major, when you are ready to begin, stand on the black pad as usual. But we do not have much time."<p>

Ryau nodded and headed over to where Endesa and Shan stood. "So us Fi-I mean four, is Canon or Ryka coming?"Shan asked as soon as he saw Ryau.

"I would like the chance to fight beside my daughter again." Ryka walked up and joined their group. Two Sentinel beams were strapped together and harnessed across his back.

"Corporal Cannon is is coming with us." Sargent Green said. "Shes extracting data out of what's left of the Pelican's computers. Typical Spook shit."

"Very well." Ryau said. "Are you done with Asau, Endesa?"

"Yes, Ryau. She already prepared for the transfer." She handed the data crystal back to Ryau and he transferred Asau back into the Device.

Ryau got more ammunition for his Needle Rifle from a nearby crate. However the others began to arm themselves from Marissa's new Forerunner weapon armory. "Major, why don't you use one of these?" Shan asked.

"I'll stick with this for now." Ryau said. "It has served me well."

"Understood." Shan said.

Ryau and the others headed over to the teleporter pad. Shan carried

the stack of pylons that would eventually create the safe zone against the flood once they got to the surface.

"Good luck." Marissa said. The black pad lit up and they vanished.

They reappeared looking at the same stained wall that had greeted them when they first appeared in this installation. "Well here we are." Ryau said, he activated a separate COM channel to Marissa. "Marissa, we made it, the teleporter room look clear. But why couldn't you send us directly to the surface?"

"Understood, transferring lock down codes to your HUD." Symbols and other minor information winked on, over his eye. The proper sequence to enter into the door controls to lock them down and close the blast doors. "_The Apex Lab is located above the power station. It is the only place with enough energy to reach the surface continuously. Over the last thirty thousand years, power output has dropped dramatically across the facility." Marissa replied.

"Ah... Alright, we'll contact you again once the facility has been cleared and locked down." Ryau stopped transmitting and looked at Shan. "You're first."

Shan nodded and crept out of the door way. They silently followed him down the corridor. Shan brought them to a halt outside the pod room. Three of Jeaso's Sentinels were scanning the room.

Ryau sent Endesa up to take them out. She held up the slender rifle as if it was any other gun. She paused for a moment as the stock conformed to her shoulder. The rifle charged and fired. The beam looked like a quick burst from a Sentinel Beam, but packed the punch of a Spartan Laser. The first Sentinel was completely vaporized and the one beside it fell to the floor in a ball of fire. She flicked her thumb over a button and fired a smaller, weaker burst and took out the last Sentinel.

"How did you know how to use that so well?" Ryau asked quietly.

"Marissa showed us how. While you were gone." Endesa whispered back.

Ryau nodded. "Good thing I didn't take one." He and Shan moved into the room and scanned down both hallways. Then they stood up.

"Main room is clear." Shan said.

"Agreed, now split up. Ryka and Shan, head down the hall on our left. Secure all the doors from here to the end of the hall. Destroy all Sentinel launchers and lock down any other rooms. Endesa, make sure they don't find a way back in here." Ryau ordered. "Naki and I will go that way." He pointed down the other hallway.

They nodded and split up. Ryau and Naki hurried down the hallway. They had gone this way before, it lead to the water pit they had used to swim out of the Apex lab. Ryau stepped over the still undisturbed Forerunner armor, likely the final resting place it's owner.

Suddenly, they heard an explosion from the room ahead of them. A door bent outward and a Flood Pure form stomped into the hall. It looked over and charged. Ryau and Naki opened fire with the weapons they had at the ready. However it just kept charging. Ryau switched to the Forerunner pistol and fired. The blue glob of energy struck the Pure form and it burst into flames. It moaned and screamed as it burned, filling the corridor with smoke. Ryau kicked it back and grabbed his re-breather from his hip.

He and Naki coughed out the smoke and breathed in the fresh, contained air. " We need to activate the blast doors. These standard ones can't stand up to the Flood." Naki said. She relayed the message to the others.

"We've got a lot of doors to lock down." Ryau said, sealing the broken door with it's thicker blast door. They moved down the hallway at a much slower pace, sealing every door along the way. Ryau carefully moved part of a Forerunner helmet out of the door jam and locked it down.

Ryau moved down his side of the hall, faster than Naki worked, he was already down the ramp. One of Jeaso's Prometheans had just finished slicing a Flood Combat form in half with it's blade. It turned and saw him. He turned to run, but it descended on him too fast. The Promethean knocked him back, and swung it's blade at his chest, but he put his arm up to block the strike. The hot blade cut through his forearm pates and his skin as if they were not there. However, the only thing that prevented him from losing his hand or just the use of his hand, was the Device. The hardened casing stopped the blade before it cut though his tendons. "Ahh!" Ryau grimaced.

Ryau kicked at the Promethean and knocked it away. It stumbled back and he grimaced through the pain. He grabbed the Forerunner pistol off his thigh and fired. The energy burned through the Promethean's armor plating, but it charged again. This time, Ryau activated the new shield that the Scientist had added and blocked the strike. Ryau was forced on to his back and the Promethean Knight pounded on the shield.

Naki leaped from the top of the ramp and landed on top of the Promethean Knight. It thrashed her around, trying to knock her off, but she held tight. She activated her wrist blade and jammed it in the back of the tall machines head. It dropped to the ground in a heap and began to disintegrate. She rolled off and ran over to Ryau's side. "Are you alright, Ryau?!" She cried. Naki popped off his damaged forearm guard and quickly dressed his wound with the small medical kit she carried.

"Yes, thanks." He groaned. "I'll live." Naki helped him stand back up. "Did you seal the other doors?"

"Yes, they're all locked down. Just one left." She walked down the hall a little more and entered the code. The blast doors eased shut and sealed with a loud click. "Father, how are you doing on your side?" She radioed to Ryka.

"We are doing fine, Naki. Minor resistance from a Promethean and some Sentinels, but Minor 'Vekatom was able to destroy it with grenades." _Ryka radioed back. _"We've secured the doors and are heading back to the main room." _

"Understood. Doing the same." Ryau added in. "Let's go Naki." He picked up his forearm guard and sealed it over the wound. They ran down the hall, all the doors along the way glowed with a red hue, signifying they were indeed locked. Ryau opened the COM channel to Marissa back up. "Marissa. Labs are secure. We're returning to the teleporter room for transport."

_"Received. Warning, we have less than one hour before the decontamination systems destroy all complex life in this installation. Scans indicated that the Gravemind is attempting to move itself to the surface." _Marissa replied. For being in a Forerunner monitor sphere for over a hundred thousand years, she was still able to convey the amount of urgency and worry that got Ryau worried.

"Fuck." Ryau resorted back to the Human swear word. "Is that enough time to get everyone out?" He and Naki leaped over a collapsed support beam and joined the others in a run for the teleporter room.

_"It should be if you can secure the surface right away." _Marissa said.

Shan grabbed the stack of pylons and moved them back onto the teleporter pad. "We're ready to go, lets get this done." There was a flash and they stood in an identical teleporter station. A cool breeze blew in from outside that smelled of burned wood and snow.

"Well... now we're full circle." Naki said.

Marissa's voice came through the rooms announcement system. _"Hurry Major. The first survivors will be arriving soon."_

Ryau pointed outside. "Shan, set up those pylons. Thirty meters apart in a hexagon formation around this structure." "Endesa, Ryka, cover him." They nodded and followed. Ryau glanced back at Naki, she clutched her Forerunner rifle and moved into position guarding the door. He walked out into the morning of the surface, keeping his Needle Rifle at the ready. However nothing outside moved but Shan and the others. No Flood in sight, or smell. A large portion of the forest was burned down to their stumps, a few charred sticks still remained standing, and snow had covered whatever died therein the days before.

A quiet hum rose from around the structure. Walls of blue shielding rose from the sides of his vision. "Ryau, the uh, thing is activating." Endesa said.

"Good, Naki let Marissa know that we're ready to receive the survivors." Ryau said.

"On it." Naki ran back inside and made contact.

Less than a minute later, the survivors started to appear in the station. Ryau hurried them through and out onto the surface. By the time the Gã'ta made it up, Marissa's countdown clock had twenty seconds left. The last group was Sargent Green and the rest of his squad, including the Spartans.

"Is that everyone?" Ryau asked.

"Affirmative. We were the last." Spartan 098 said.

"Good," Naki said. "We should try to contact someone to get us out of here."

"Good idea. I'll broadcast on both UNSC and Covenant frequencies to see who can get us first." Ryau recorded two messages, one in English and one on Sangheilian, and sent them out on the two COM channels. "This is Special Operations Major, Ryau Cinotee. I am requesting assistance from anyone near my position. We have survivors, about eight hundred, and one requires a heavy lift system." Then he waited for any response.

One finally came from the wreck of the _Glorious Retribution. "Major, this is the Shipmaster. My communications officer alerted me to your message. And out of good faith, we are sending Phantoms and Spirits. What is the nature of your survivor?"_

"We have about three hundred Sangheili, one hundred assorted other Covenant species and about four hundred humans." Ryau said. He was also surprised at the number the data-pad had given him.

"Hmm, very well. I will honor my agreement with the Humans. The pilots will drop them off in the main hangar. All will be quarantined until later." The Shipmaster said. _"We shall arrive before the day is over."_

"Understood." Ryau was about to cut the messages when he got pinged on the UNSC COM channel.

"Major this is Base, we've been attacked by the flood and are unable to provide assistance. We are evacuating civilians and are going to detonate incendiary devices."

"We copy. We're being assisted by the _Glorious Retribution._ However, we have specially designed shields given to us by a Forerunner. If you need them to build a safe zone, send a single Pelican to pick them up." Ryau offered.

A moment passed. "Understood, Captain Brown gave the go ahead. Do you have a set of instructions?"

"We'll send someone that knows how, we'll be waiting."

Soon, the roar of Pelican engines echoed across the mountain range. A scorched and battered Pelican flew over and turned back, looking for a landing zone. The fire a week ago had cleared the hillside enough to make a proper landing zone. _"Major, we've only got enough fuel to touch down for sixty seconds. Are you ready?"_ The pilot said.

"Yes they are." Ryau pointed Shan to the remaining pile of pylons. "As soon as you're down, we'll load them on board." He looked over at Canon. "You're going with them."

"Yes sir." She nodded.

The Pelican settled down and the back hatch eased open. Shan ran up

and slid the pylons in. The Crew Chief pulled Cannon into the troop compartment. A Lieutenant ran out of the back and over to Ryau. "Sir! Captain Brown says to watch out for Colonel Hartford. He's gone rouge and we think he's the one that let the Flood into the base."

The Crew Chief leaned out the back. "Lieutenant, you've got twenty seconds or else we leave you here." He yelled.

"Do not mention him over COM channels, he may be listening." The Lieutenant nodded and ran back to the Pelican. It lifted off right away and headed North, out of the mountains.

Ryau knelt down and helped some survivors with ration packs and made some fires. They waited a few hours before a fleet of Phantoms and Spirits appeared on the horizon. The lead Phantom settled near the Forerunner structure and the Shipmaster himself stepped out. However, back in the station, Marissa's voice called through the announcement system. _"Major! Jeaso is vulnerable, but I need your help as soon as possible." _

Ryau sighed. The Shipmaster had heard the message too. "Shipmaster, I need to help her. I don't know when I'll be back." He said in Sangheilian

"I understand Major. However, they will still be under your responsibility." The Shipmaster replied.

"Sargent Green, don't get me in any trouble." Ryau said switching to English. Switching between languages was difficult sometimes.

"I wont. Go kick that guys ass." Green said.

Ryau nodded and headed back to the teleporter station. Naki and the others joined him once they entered. "Well lets get this done." He said. Marissa activated the teleporter and they dropped in, back inside the installation. However, once the flash cleared, they were not inside the Apex Lab. They were on top of it, on another pad looking over a war zone. Not the seemingly peaceful environment they had left just a few hours ago.

Vast areas of forest were bare down to the soil, in some places massive pieces of the installation's ceiling had fallen atop the mountains and rivers that lied below, corresponding with holes above, revealing bedrock. The hulls of Guardian Sentinels still glowed hot around where Ryau stood. "Gods...what happened?" Ryau muttered, he could not believe the level of destruction to the overall installation.

_"Jeso sabotaged the cleansing beam. It destroyed the Flood, but then the trees as well, just before exploding. The explosions caused a cataclysmic failure in the installation's environmental control system and severely damaging the rest of the super structure." _
_Marissa responding through his headset. _ "My factories were within the blast radius, and then he attacked in full force. He must be truly mad, what does he hope to achieve!"_

"Well what do we need to do?" Ryau asked. "His forces still outnumber the survivors on the surface, and they are still dealing with the Flood."

_"He is commanding his forces from another site in his sector. It is a relay station that allows him to communicate and control all his Sentinel forces. He needs to be there because the explosion damaged the command network. I too am in my station." _Marissa said. _"We're going to go in. Kill the bastard, or at least incapacitate him, and then. Shut. His. Sector. Down." _She only paused for half a second. _"I'll direct all. And I mean all this time. Of my remaining forces to assist. A gondola from I-Forty-nine's sector has been dispatched to meet you all."_

Ryau leaned down, picked up a pebble, and tossed it at the glowing metal. "Alright, is this it? The final attack?"

Marissa waited a second._"Yes, this is it. One final effort is all that remains."_

21. Act V Pt 1 One Final Effort I

The Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act V Part 1

**One Final Effort I.**

**September 16 2555 0500hrs **

>Areo Installation 01-1 [Inside Planet Standard IV]

>Jeaso Sector

>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]

* * *

><p>A fine dust blew over a steep ridge. The sparking remains of Forerunner Sentinels littered the landscape, left over from the intense battles the night before. The ash remains of the installation's vegetation and animal population was lifted off the ground and met with the fine metallic dust in the updraft. The collection of dust and ash was lofted high into the air, and sat there among the clouds. However, a moment later it was scattered and tossed about in the engines of a black detailed Sentinel. Then a green detailed Gondola plowed through what was left of the forming cloud. Thousands of Sentinels, of all types, flew in formation alongside the Gondola.<p>

"Now entering Jeaso's sector." A Sentinel announced. Fifteen of Marissa's Promethean Knight based armor platforms waited in the lower deck of the large Gondola. Many more of I-Forty-nine's were on the ground already.

Ryau and Naki stood at the front and watched the screen that appeared over the controls. It was detailing the structure that Jeaso was holding out in. As usual, it was mostly hallways and spare rooms. Marissa suggested that Jeaso was in to lowest room, behind all his forces.

"Well this is it." Ryau said. "I hope that when this is done, there will be a way off this planet."

"Yes, as do I." Naki replied. "The others are ready to go, but this may be difficult."

"Oh it will be. There's nowhere else for him to go. He'll do everything he can to stop us."

"That is what I am worried about. These plans are from the construction of this installation, he has had over a hundred thousand years to alter the inside." Naki changed the view to the topographical plan.

"So we'll be extra careful." Ryau said. All at once, the Sentinels broke off and dropped downwards. The sound of Forerunner sentinel beams echoed in the valley below. Ryau headed back to the passenger compartment of the Gondola. He and Naki took their seats besides the others.

"Let's try to not break any bones this time." Endesa said.

The Gondola's engines cut and they began to drop. They entered a free fall, and one of Marissa's Knights floated off the floor for a moment before it activated its magnetic grips. "Brace." One told the Sangheili.

A moment later, the Gondola slammed into the ground. The Gondola's lower strut smashed through the roof of Jeaso's bunker, crumpling and breaking off. The main platform slid off the roof and ripped through the surviving forest. They came to rest four hundred meters away from their initial landing site. The restraints released and Ryau shook the impact off.

"Is everyone alright?" Ryau looked down at the Device to be sure it was in working order.

"Everyone's vital signs are reading normal. However instruments can be damaged, visual checking is always good." Asau said, coming from the body of the Knight she was controlling. Marissa had wired up a control unit that would not disintegrate if the rest were destroyed so they would not need to worry about her.

Everyone acknowledged him and said they were intact. Ryka helped Endesa and Shan out of their seats and grabbed their weapons from the restraint fields behind their seats.

"Very good, everyone move out." Ryau said. A Knight pried open the dented doors, and Ryau slowly crept down to the smoking dirt below. Marissa's Knights hopped down beside him and charged into battle. Flashes of energy seared by as Jeaso's defenses came back online after the shock of the crash.

Ryau and Naki took cover behind a downed tree as Asau's Knight slid in behind them. Above them, one of Marissa's Knights leaped over the tree trunk, only to be blown apart. The unfortunate Knight fell back over the tree and began to disintegrate beside Ryau. Its weapon had dropped in front of another Knight who quickly discarded its own weapon for the stronger cannon. Ryau got its attention and made a hand signal towards the heavy turret. The Knight acknowledged his order. The modified Sentinel AIs that the Scientist had created were working well as replacements for lost combat ancillas that normally drove the Promethean Knight battle suits.

The Knight leaned over and fired the large weapon. The blue energy

beam separated into individual projectiles and cut through the large turret. Forerunner alloy boiled and melted, collapsing to the ground as a useless heap.

On the other side of the compound, Endesa, Shan and Ryka pushed through with the aid of I-Forty-Nine's Knight ground force. Small explosions ignited the trees that had been spared by the cleansing beam.

"Ryka, status." Ryau asked quickly after hearing the explosions.

"We have made it around the back side of the structure, however we are unable to find a way into the interior." _Ryka responded over the radio.

"Understood, we're just now making it through the first line of defenses, but I do not see anything resembling a door. We may just have to go in the hole we made." Ryau said. A grenade launched by Jeaso's forces detonated nearby, blowing a tree stump and Knight to splinters.

"We will make our way there, see you soon." _Ryka cut the link from his end.

Ryau popped up from behind the log and unloaded his Promethean rifle at Jeaso's Knights. Asau broke off and deployed a hardlight shield for Naki. Ryau changed his sights and eliminated the light turret that had threatened Naki and Asau.

"Let's go!" Ryau shouted. They hopped over their cover and charged for the structure. Marissa and I-Forty-Nine's Knights formed up around them, taking any incoming fire that headed their way. A group of friendly Sentinels soared overhead and slowed to engage Jeaso's. The larger Enforcers arced over the treetops and fired their barrage of missiles at the remaining ground targets.

Ryau and Naki slammed into the side of the structure. The battle was over around the structure, but the sound of fighting still echoed from the valley and in the skies above.

"Major. Jeaso somehow managed to intercept my teleportation channels, reinforcements were diverted to the canyons thirty kilometers away." _Marissa said over the command com network.

"That's fine, we can move in by ourselves. Plans do not show much room inside." Ryau replied.

"Very well. Good luck, Major. Kill the bastard for me." _She said before going offline.

"Alright, up we go." Ryau said. He grabbed the branches of a fallen tree, and climbed his way up to the roof of the structure. The turrets on the roof had been eliminated by the Enforcer rocket bombardment earlier and small fires raged from exposed conduits.

The Knights jumped the distance. Asau carried Naki up in her jump, setting her down on the landing. Ryka and his group climbed up the other side, coming around the Gondola's strut. They grouped up and

made their way down the burning hole in Jeaso's structure. Ryau's shields flickered from the sparks and he dropped down onto a platform. Naki and the others dropped down as well. The floor was wet, and singed plants grew along the wall panels. It appeared very clear that Jeaso had not kept this place in pristine condition.

Naki projected a map from a holo-drone, another item they had procured from the _Glorious Retribution's_ armory. "It does not appear that he has altered any of the original layout. Directly below is the teleporter nexus. It's online, but operating at minimal power. Just beneath that is the Sentinel control core, where Jeaso is," Naki said, pointing to the corresponding locations on the map.

"Well down we go, I want to rip his eye out of his socket I lost my other arm because of him." Shan said.

"Asau, take the Knights around to the left. I'll take the others down the right ramp." Ryau said as he started down the other ramp down to the lower levels.

Naki surveyed the area for any noticeable changes in the design they were given. Finding none, she quickly followed Ryau down the ramp.

Conduits sparked and control panels attempted to flash back to existence, however they did not remain active long. The screens displayed the location of every active transmitter in Jeaso's sector before they faded away. Ryau crept down, there were pieces of Sentinels that had been crushed by the Gondola's strut. However, so far nothing attacked them.

The tip of the strut had pierced the ceiling of the teleporter nexus room, but the rest of the room was fine. Jeaso's Knights stood guard around the next ramp pair across the room. Ryau leaned back, out of view of the small view port in the door.

"There are four Knights guarding the door to the lower level. Shan, you have the heavy weapon, as soon as the door opens, fire at the two on the right. Asau should get the two on the left. These new weapons are much stronger than what we've been using, they should work fine against the Knights, as we've seen so far." Ryau said.

"Understood, Major." Shan moved up, hefting the large weapon over his shoulder and kneeling into position

Ryau pressed the door control. The doors slid open, Shan leaned in and fired off two rounds. Marissa's Knights on the other doorway did the same. Four orbs of energy flew towards four of Jeaso's red painted Promethean knights. The four knights turned and watched the orbs fly towards them for only a split second. A moment later, they exploded in blue balls of energy.

"Well they're dead." Shan said, standing back up.

Ryau moved past him and headed through the door. "Good coordination. Well, here we go. Just below this floor is where Jeaso is holed up. Asau, you and half the Knights stand guard at these pads. He still has some teleportation capability. Everyone else, let's move on down." Ryau opened the door to the final room, did a sweep and started to move into the hall.

****Day before. ****

>September 15th 2555 1440 hours

>Standard IV

>UNSC Decommissioned-storage Facility Bravo

>[ExCovenant] Weapons Master Kala 'Velamn

* * *

><p>Kala and Williams hid below the computer console as the Parasite was engaged by a few Human fireteams holding them at bay a few sectors away. She sneaked a peek over the computer console and spotted the Sergeant and the others taking cover inside the other security bay.<p>

A grenade detonated outside the room and cracked the safety glass. A few bullets flew down hallway and struck the Combat forms by the elevator shaft. With the Parasite distracted, Kala took the risk and pressed the button for the blast doors. With a creak the metal plates lowered over the glass and sealed them off from the Parasite. She sighed and stood out from under the console. Williams grabbed her assault rifle and watched the door.

"Do you think help will come?" She asked Williams.

"Don't know, but we're going to have to fight our way out." Williams said. She handed Kala an Assault Rifle off the weapon rack. "Watch the door, I'll get on the COM."

Kala looked over the weapon, and aimed it at the doorway. Williams worked on the console and hooked the damaged wires together with adhesive tape.

"This is Corporal Williams in security..." Williams glanced at the sheet of paper listing the proper call codes. "In... Checkpoint Seven. We're overrun and locked down in the guard post. There are others in the other post. Requesting assistance."

_"Copy that, we've been in contact with Sergeant Foss and a squad has already been sent to your location." _The command center said. _"You and Gamma Squad were able to keep the Flood at bay just long enough for us to evac any civilians from the lower levels" _

A grenade detonated outside and cracked the safety glass behind the titanium shutters. The gunfire outside intensified. A burst of flame roared past the doorway. Human Helljumpers opened fire with flamethrowers and SMGs. The Parasite forms ignited and screamed as they burned and staggered back with every bullet impact.

One of the Shock Troopers banged on the window with his fist. "Come on! Let's move, let's move!"

Kala pressed the door release and the heavy gate slid open. She gripped the Assault Rifle and ran out behind Williams. She pulled the trigger and fired half a clip of shredder rounds into a group of Combat forms, blowing each of the parasite infection forms in their chest cavities to bits.

"Transports in the hangar, straight back down the hall. Move now!"

The Shock Trooper fired his flamethrower down the elevator shaft.

Sergeant Foss ran out behind the others. Kala charged up behind him, and down the corridor. Williams was right on her tail. She slid around the corner and into the hangar. Two of the human drop ships, the Pelicans, remained. A few Warthogs also sat beside the Pelicans.

_"Two minutes until detonation! Everyone clear the base immediately!"
_One of the base technicians announced over the PA system, likely from a transport that was already clear.

Kala hopped on board one Pelican behind Foss and Williams. It was already half full of equipment. The Shock Troopers hopped on the remaining Warthogs and gunned it out of the hangar and into a cave. Her radio buzzed with a broadcast on her monitor of Human communication channels.

_"This is Special Operations Major Ryau Cinotee. I am requesting assistance from anyone near my position. We have survivors, about eight hundred, and one requires a heavy lift system." _

There was nothing for a few moments, but then the Humans responded to the Major's call. _"Major this is Base, we've been attacked by the Flood and are unable to provide assistance. We are evacuating civilians and are going to detonate incendiary devices." _

_"We copy. We're being assisted by the Glorious Retribution. However, we have specially designed shields given to us by a Forerunner. If you need them to build a safe zone, send a single Pelican to pick them up." _The Major replied.

Kala listened to the communications until the humans went back to normal chatter. The Major that had brought her out of the small city that was built under the _Glorious Retribution, _had indeed survived where ever he and half his team had disappeared to.

There was a loud rumble that overtook the Pelican's engines. Kala looked out the hatch window as fire erupted from the hangar opening and other shafts that fed the facility in the mountain. Dust soon followed that as the top of the mountain collapsed in on itself, crushing anything that remained inside. She looked down and saw the Warthogs from earlier, racing through the plains below. The massive parasite tentacles that had emerged at some point during the attack withered and fell to the ground.

Something had happened at its source, and now the parasite core was dead or dying.

The Pelican banked to the south and dropped above a convoy of the massive tracked transports they called Elephants. Turrets on the transports shredded the Parasite combat forms that swarmed them.

Kala gripped as the Pelican banked hard and released a trio of missiles at the Parasite on the ground.

Her radio buzzed again. _"This is Captain Brown. All units fall back to grid four-three by one-nine. Fortifications have been set up and

we are utilizing new technology to screen for infection. Repeat, all units, fall back to grid four-three by one-nine ASAP."_

The pilots set a new course and turned back toward the coast. Kala looked over at Williams and Foss, their weapons and uniforms stained by the green fluids secreted by the Parasite. The Pelican itself was heavily beaten. Bullet holes and plasma burning pockmarked the bulkhead between the troop bay and the cockpit. Human blood was splattered across the crash seats and crates. Whoever had spilled that blood was nowhere to be seen. Kala closed her eyes for a moment, and rested for the first time in the last day.

She awoke as the Pelican bounced on its landing gear. The rear hatch was already open and a soft blue glow illuminated the troop compartment. She stood up and stepped out of the dropship. The light was being emitted from a glowing wall of energy that surrounded the valley they had landed in.

A group of Human soldiers in heavy gear walked down the line of Pelicans, they held a device that looked Forerunner in origin. They scanned the occupants of the drop ships and, one by one, they crews were released and had to pass through another energy barrier that she had just noticed between the landing zone and the rest of the camp.

A human standing atop an Elephant made an announcement through the vehicles exterior public address system. _"Attention, everyone must remain in the vehicles until medical personnel have checked to make sure you are not infected. Repeat. Remain in the vehicles until cleared by the medical personnel." _He paused for a moment. _"This is a quarantine situation.__If you do not follow all directions, you will be considered infected and dealt with as such." _

Upon hearing that, Kala slowly backed into her seat and remained there until the Humans had arrived first. "Alright, you all look clean, but we need to be sure. So lets have the squid face up first." A male Trooper said. Kala did not move, she had never heard the term squid face before.
>"You Split-lip. Get up here and let us scan you." He was visibly annoyed and pointed at Kala.<p>

Reluctantly, Kala stepped foreword and was scanned by the device. There was a beep and he looked back up at her.

"She's good to go. Follow the others to the entrance, they'll let you in." he said.

Kala waisted no time leaving the Pelican. She hurried down the line and was ten meters away from the gate when a smoking Pelican glided overhead. It listed from side to side before suddenly dropping into the ground inside the landing zone. Sensing something bad was about to happen, Kala sprinted towards the entry into the main camp. She passed the others that had been released before her, and passed through the shield before it was closed.

The crashed Pelican's rear hatch exploded outward. Fragments bouncing across the field. Then suddenly, Parasite infection forms spread out towards the energy barrier. The Humans that had cleared her of infection, turned their guns toward the wave and opened fire. Bullets tore through the Parasite, causing them to explode violently. Combat

forms launched themselves out of the troop compartment and over the barriers. A female Army Trooper shoved an MA5C into her hands.

"Elite, go assist." She said.

Kala nodded and hurried over to where the Combat forms hopped over. There were many, at least twenty that had made it out. She took cover behind a stack of crates, that had just been offloaded from a truck, and fired a burst at a former Sangheili, taking it down. In her peripheral vision, she saw Williams and Foss firing from behind the Pelican's landing gear. A Combat form jumped out and slapped her across the chest, taking down her shields. She shoved it back with her shoulder and tore it apart with the Assault rifle.

Kala crouched down behind the crates to let her shields recover. Another Combat form leaped through the air and landed on the crates in front of her, denting the cases. An M90 Shotgun was tight in it's grip. Time seemed to move slower for her then, adrenaline altering her perception. She raised her Assault rifle and pulled the trigger only halfway up the Parasites body. Bullets tore through the rotting flesh, but then she heard a click. The Parasite's weapon discharged. Her armor held, but the body suit could not withstand a point blank discharge from a human shotgun. Her chest was ripped open, her ribs breaking under the pressure. The Assault rifle continued upwards and the Combat form was ripped in half.

Kala fell back, dropping the Assault rifle and hitting the crates behind her. Blood dripped from the hole. She didn't believe it, she couldn't feel anything. She sank to her side, her body going into shock from the blast. Her primary heart was torn to pieces and her second struggled to cope.

A Sangheili ran out of the smoke. He knelt down and lifted her up into his arms and took her away from the battle. All she could see were the blurred lights that reflected off his white armor. Something pierced her arm and Kala's eyes closed.

****Present****

>September 16 2555 0658hrs

>Areo Installation 01-1 [Inside Planet Standard IV]

>Jeaso Sector

>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]

* * *

><p>Ryau pressed the button to open the heavy door. It slid open, revealing Jeaso's Sentinel control room. Banks of command consoles displayed thousands of commands and information about the battle going out outside. He motioned for Ryka and his group to flank left while he and Naki headed right. Moving at a crouch, they moved just below the line of sight in the room. Ryau glanced up over the consoles, the damaged red monitor that they knew as Jeaso hovered silently connected to a terminal at the back of the room.<p>

"Naki, see if you can interface with the console right here, try and turn off the systems." Ryau whispered.

Naki nodded and pried open a seam in the alloy. She connected her

data-pad to the circuit and went to work.

Jeaso blinked and looked over. "Vermin, there is nothing you can do to stop my army. But it is a shame. Just a case of being in the wrong place, at the wrong time. My campaign did not involve your little group." His voice scratchy, in poor Sangheili.

"You involved us as soon as you started imprisoning the others of this planet." Ryau replied "Now!" Ryau popped up from behind his cover, as did Ryka, Shan and Endesa. Asau and the Knights ran down the ramp and everyone opened fire on Jeaso in the center of the room.

Jeaso activated a shield much like the kind used by Enforcer Sentinels. It took all the bolts of energy and plasma like it was nothing. "Ha! Failure again. Nice try. My Knights should be here to eliminate you, very soon. You see, you all made a major tactical mistake. There is only one way out of this room. You are cornered." Jeaso's eye flashed with every word.

"Not for long." Naki said from behind the console. One after another, command prompts went offline.

Jeaso looked around at them frantically. "No! How did you do that!? Our superior systems are uncrackable!"

"Not anymore." Naki said. "We as a species came this far by breaching your, so called, superior systems."

Ryau fired as he crept closer to Jeaso, his shield absorbing the damage, but the others drawing his attention. Ryau held fire and waited for Jeaso to turn all his attention to Ryka and Asau. Jeaso charged his eye and fired a beam of red energy at Asau, who ducked and dodged the beam. However one of her Knights wasn't so lucky. The beam sliced through the Knights armor, and it fell forward before disintegrating.

Ryau ran from behind the consoles and jumped on the Jeaso's back. He activated his wrist blade and jammed it into the Monitor core. Jeaso screamed and sparks flew. Ryau jumped off, and gripped the core with his hand. He over powered Jeaso's hover systems and slammed the core into the wall.

"No! Noooo!" Jeaso yelled.

Ryau grabbed the casing with his other hand and yanked at the core. Jeaso's lights dimmed and then went dark as the core was ripped out of the Monitor sphere. Sparks shot out as it experienced a catastrophic system failure. By then, all the control consoles displayed a single blinking message. _Sentinel Systems Disabled._ It was over. Jeaso was dead.

Outside the structure, Jeaso's turrets winked off, his Knights collapsing into stand-by mode. In the sky, thousands of Sentinels closed up and shut down. They all fell to the ground, no longer receiving any command signals.

The casing clattered to the ground and Ryau tossed the eye to Shan. "Hope that makes up for your arm." He said.

Shan caught the eye and looked at it. "Mostly."

"Good job, Naki." Ryau walked over, and placed his arm on her shoulder. "Good job everyone, let's get out of here."

They headed up out of the structure and into the now quiet battlefield. Marissa and I-Forty-Nine's Knights stood about, also in stand-by mode since there were no more hostiles to deal with.

Suddenly an announcement echoed throughout the installation in the Forerunner language, it was not from Marissa, or any of the others they knew. _"Attention, Aero Installation control has been restored to Installation Ancilla effective immediately. Connection to entity Jeaso and entity Aurora of the Night lost. Connection to __Drift of True Sands__ and Marissa stable. Evidence of large scale conflict detected. Dispatching repair Sentinels. Estimated time to optimal efficiency- Unknown."_

A black pad appeared under a layer of dirt and Marissa appeared. "Well, it's finally over isn't it. Jeaso is gone."

"Yes he is," Ryau said and nodded to Shan, who showed her the eye.

"I believe that shows the truth more than anything, and it appears that Jeaso didn't kill the Ancilla, only deactivated it." She said. "However, my mother requests that we join her in her sanctum."

"Very well, let's go." Ryau moved onto a now exposed teleportation pad. The others did the same, and they were teleported away.

When Ryau reappeared in the Scientists dome, her hardlight form was standing a mere half meter away. However a moment later, Ryau realized that it was not her hardlight form at all, _she _was standing in front of them, solid, and organic.

"The machine was a success." She said simply.

"Mother? You mean you fixed it. Already?" Marissa asked, if she too had been in her organic form, her face would have the look of surprise.

"Yes, it is fully functional. We can have you and Jeaso's victims fixed within the next few hours." The Scientist said.

"That is great news! Can we begin at once?" Asau blurted out.

"Of course. Follow me." The Scientist turned back towards her corridor. "After the process is started, Naki and Ryau, I would like to speak to you alone. Once you're finished Marissa, you may join us." The Scientist started down the corridor and everyone else followed her.

"Yes mother," Marissa said, floating along beside her organic mother.

They entered the main chamber of the structure, in the center of the room a machine sat where the operating platform was the last time Ryau was here. It looked like two pods on their sitting on the ground

horizontally.

"Asau, Marissa, go into shutdown mode and I'll insert your cores into the machine." The Scientist said, waiting for them to do so. Marissa's eye went dark and Asau's Knight armor began to disintegrate around her core. The Scientist picked up Marissa and removed her central core. She then grabbed Asau's from the dust that was the armor and plugged them both into the machine. "Now Ryau, the core that holds the others you recovered from Jeaso." The Scientist held out her hand.

Ryau nodded and took off his pack. He pulled out the data core and handed it over to her. "Where are we going to talk, ma'am?" He asked.

She hooked up the data core for the next round of transfers. "This way, follow me." The Scientist walked over to small door in the back wall. "We need to wake someone."

The door slid open and they followed her downward. It was a long walk, that deposited them into a large open room. Naki brought up the Installation schematics and saw that this area was not on them.

The Scientist continued forward, without looking back. "It was an after thought, Naki. I added it after the program began to decline." She placed her palm on a wall and another passage opened, only this time a pod slid out.

Inside was a large male Forerunner. "This is my husband and my body guard. If you had read our daughter's log entries, you would know him as the Soldier. We were both orphans and no one knew who we were. No family, no lineage. We weren't related but everyone remembered us appearing on the planet together. I received a Scientific imprint, and he became a Promethean. We were similar to the Librarian and Didact. My real name is Misheelle... his is Nek."

Ryau and Naki exchanged glances, unsure where this was going, but they knew those names were familiar. The Scientist pressed a button on the side and the lid slid up. Air hissed around an actual Forerunner Promethean, and his eyes fluttered open. Nek stood up and looked around the room. He stopped on Ryau and Naki, then looked to his wife. Promethean Knight armor appeared around him, an eerily similar emblem to Ryau's was on the chest piece. _"Hmph. I thought he'd be taller." _Nek said in the Forerunner language. _"Do they know yet?"_

"No, I decided to wake you first. However Ryau does speak our language, so unless you want to spoil it, I'll continue."

The Scientist responded. "So... I will just go right to the point. Ryau, Naki, we are you."

"W-what?" Naki asked, not fully understanding what they had just been told.

"When you two, the originals, came into this reality, you fractured. Something went wrong, you two split into different copies that were dropped over time and space. Nek and I, we are just one by-product of that accident." The Scientist said. "The installation that houses the machine that brought us here was sealed off a millennial before we

entered this reality. However, from what research I was able to find, it is a hybrid of Forerunner and Precursor technology that was created to manipulate reality and time. Its existence out of the planes of time and space is what likely shielded it from the destructive paths of the Halo array."

Ryau sat down on the floor. "So Nek and I are the same and Naki and you are the same. But how are you sure that Naki and I are the originals?"

"I procured a log of the Machine's activity. The equations on the page were complex and it was incomplete. However dates matched with when you and Naki should have entered." The Scientist said. "It also makes sense considering the circumstances surrounding the event."

"Can I see this information?" Naki said. "I'd like to understand it better."

"Yes, it is stored on an isolation system in this room." Misheelle and Naki walked towards another doorway that eased open.

Nek reached down and helped Ryau up. "_So... Ryau."_

"Nek..."

Ryau responded in the Forerunner language. Nek and Ryau were almost the same height, but Nek was taller. "_I don't remember much of what happened during our travel into this reality, it has been a while."_

"Longer for me, Misheelle and I are four thousand years old. Young for Forerunners, but very old for your kind. However it is entirely understandable. So, what is your story?"

Nek asked, a chair forming below him as he sat back.

_"Well, when I woke up, I was in the Spartan training camps on Reach. Er, you remember that right?" _Ryau asked.

_"Yes, I made sure those memories were maintained by my personal Ancilla. However, even she didn't know what they were." _Nek said.

_"Alright, well I woke up and just accepted the life that I had. I had memories of a past in this reality. What finally broke that facade, was that I was captured by the Covenant and the scientist in charge was Naki, or Michelle. They turned me into a Sangheili using this device." _Ryau held up his arm. "_The one your Michelle had created. She recognized my Human self and that broke her memories. Fought the rest of the Human-Covenant war, survived it all. Got knocked back a few years because of the Device again and then ended up here."_

"Fate is crafty like that. You two, separated for half your life as different species. Then reunited with a device created by another version of you. Only then to end up saving and meeting your other versions."

Nek said. "_My story is different. Misheelle and I didn't have lives

pre-made for us. When we appeared, we only spoke the language, thankfully. We didn't know what happened, but two families took each of us into their homes. The planet had both Warrior-Servants and Lifeworkers, we were taken by one of each family. I received my adoptive father's physical imprint, Misheelle, her adoptive mothers. Our lives went on, we received our titles, The Soldier, The Scientist. Yes, very general, I know." _Nek chuckled.

"_We Promethean's weren't so respected anymore, but then the Flood attacked. The Didact assigned me to protect the Scientist and her research in this Shield World program. But then something changed. The Didact called us all back to his personal Shield World. He accepted my refusal and sent this armor to me, the systems to construct it and a number of combat Ancillas to this installation. The Halo array was activated by the Iso-Didact, we managed to find an opening in slipspace and were in it when the waves passed." Nek's face turned sour. "Months after we landed here, we found out the combat ancillas were actually fellow Prometheans that had been composed using the crude, older version of the machines that were used on my daughter."_

"I am sorry, Nek."

Ryau said. _"That must have been a horrible revelation."_

"At the time it was, but it is too late now."

Nek sighed. _"And that is it. I went into the stasis pod and woke up in the room with you."_

"Are there other Forerunners here?"

Ryau asked.

_"Yes, there are four more in stasis. Two male, two female." _Nek responded.

Before Ryau could ask another question, Naki and the Scientist returned from the other room. "...So the Generator is a constant in time. It will never go off, and always exist." Naki said.

"Correct, it appears that way." The Scientist responded.

_"Enjoy your investigation, scientists?" _Nek asked them with a chuckle.

"Yes, we did. It was good to have a conversation with someone as smart as you." She responded.

>Out of the small corridor, Marissa walked in, fully Forerunner, and clothed in a similar garment as her mother. "Mother, Father." Marissa said, acknowledging them.<p>

_"Hello my daughter, it is good to see you back to your organic self." _Nek said with a nod.

_"And it is good to see you two Father. It has been a very, very long time." _Marissa returned his nod.

However Ryau butt into the conversation. "Sorry to interrupt, but we need to figure out how to get you off the planet. I severely doubt

that the Humanity's Office of Naval Intelligence will allow you to leave this planet. They'll probably cover it all up and dissect you."

"That is... unnerving..." Nek said. _"Should we hide ourselves in this installation?"_

"ONI was down here before the Covenant attacked. They already know." Ryau said. "They'll be back some time."

"Your estate, it is a restricted area on the planet. However, that would be for after we get you off the planet." Naki added. "Though it depends on who get's here first. The Scientist told me that she monitored a distress signal being broadcasted two weeks ago. If it is Sangheili, we could ask for assistance, but if it is Human, they likely have ONI operatives in the crew."

"So that means someone should be arriving any time now." Ryau said. "Either way, I should take my squad and the survivors back up to the surface in case something does come."

"Yes you should. If some help comes along, send a message though the teleportation console." The Scientist suggested.

Ryau stood back up. "Then we should be going. How many have been restored by now Marissa?"

"Almost ten percent, if I remember correctly. I can no longer just look up information from the network." She said. "It will be a few days before all have been restored."

"I see, we'll wait at the old camp." Ryau said, starting towards the ramp. "It was a pleasure meeting you, Nek. We'll have to share stories some time" Ryau chuckled.

"That does sound like a good idea." Nek said with a nod.

Ryau and Naki headed up the ramp to the pads, ready to head back to camp.

To Be Continued.

>End One Final Effort Part 1

* * *

><p>AN
>3 month wait and here it is!<p>

There was too much stuff happening to contain it in one chapter, so I split it in two. The next chapter should be coming along within a few days. I still need to finish typing it.

Big thanks to ~rocet306 from DevArt for all the help, just wish I had enough time for you to review the last half of this one, if there are any problems, point them out and I'll fix them ASAP. [I'm going out of town for a few days, going to Utah to see my aunt]

AN: Hey everyone, so sorry its taken six months to get this out, life got busy and I just lost steam on getting this done. There will probably be one last chapter after this, so sit back, and enjoy.

****_The _**_Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act V Part_2******

****One Final Effort II****

****September 20th 2555. 0525 hours**
>****Standard IV**
>****Evacuation Site**
>****[Ex-Covenant] Weapons Master Kala 'Velamn**
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><p>Kala's eyes fluttered open. Her chest felt as if it were on fire, but something moved, cooling her off. She began to hear faint blasts echoing from outside the structure she was in. The ground shook as she made out more explosions. Gunfire ricocheted off the metal walls, and someone stood quickly and checked the door. As her hearing began to return, Kala could hear the Human radio channels fade into a mess of orders and other yells.<p>

There was a click as someone changed the radio channel. "_What the hell is happening over there Lieutenant?!" _someone shouted. Judging by the background noise, they were not anywhere near where she was right now.

"_The Flood came in on a Pelican two days ago. They jumped the inner fence and smashed the outer perimeter pylons, Sir!"_ Another voice shouted over the radio. "_The Pelican was the one stolen by Colonel Hartford."

>_
>"_Then let's hope the bastard died on it." _The first voice said. "_Stupid fucking Spook."

>_
>A few days ago, if she had heard this conversation, she would only have understood a few words, at best. Fortunately, she learned fast, and the aid of her translator had helped greatly to speed the process.

"_We don't know,_ _sir, but Corporal Cannon is doing her best to re-engage the system. Though_ _it almost looks like she's doing it as slow as possible!" _The second voice groaned.

"_She's a Spook too isn't she? Probably in on whatever the Colonel is up to. Find someone else to work that fence system." _The first suggested.

"_Sir, Cannon is the only one the Major sent before he disappeared underground again_ _who_ _knows how to do anything with-"_ A short scream was heard from the second person's side. It was female, and only lasted a second. "_Jesus. She's gone... The shield, it reactivated. It cut her in half€" _Fuck."

>_
>"_Well she did her job. That's all we could have asked for right now. Get your ass in gear and finish off the Flood in the camp!"

>_
>"_Sir. Yes sir." _The voice at the battle went off as he presumably hung up and went to work.

Kala was about to sit up when another voice entered the conversation. It was louder and deeper, and it was in the room with her. "Captain Brown. Colonel Hartford is alive. He wa-

The new voice was cut off by Captain Brown. "_Who is this?_ _Identify yourself."

>_
>The voice replied. "This is Ultra R`tae 'Kastumai. I was tracking Hartford." Kala was somewhat relieved to hear that the voice belonged to another Sangheili.

"_Continue,_ _Ultra. What is it that you have to say?_" Captain Brown replied.

"Colonel Hartford led the Flood onto his Pelican and set the automatic guidance system to bring him to these coordinates. He purposefully sent them here." Ultra 'Kastumai said.

"_That bastard. Do you know where he went next?_" _Brown asked.

"He and his bodyguards loaded a few hundred files into a small shuttle on an overgrown spaceport located a few kilometers from where your Pelican picked me up."

"_I don't know of any landing strip other than the one I'm at right now_ _that isn't an old crater. I'll have a tech check the records. Any-" _There was a loud explosion outside the prefab structure, and Kala was knocked off the table and onto the ground. The gel that covered her chest wound was forced onto the other side as she hit the ground. Burning pieces of metal rained across the room. As the air cleared, Kala saw that an entire side of the structure was missing.

Kala gripped the table, and pulled herself up. Through the smoke, she spied her dented chest piece and shield generator on the floor beside a smoldering communications set. She crawled over and carefully slipped the straps of the shield generator over her shoulders, trying not to dislodge the Sangheili healing pack that someone, most likely 'Kastumai, had strapped to her chest.

The shield system hummed to life and she felt the static tingle that let her know that the shield had covered her. Through the smoke she could see the burning remains of a power generator outside. Parasite Combat forms scrambled across the smoldering field, only to be gunned down by a heavy turret.

She saw 'Kastumai kneeling in the smoke next to the broken wall, firing a Human sniper rifle into the battle outside. A line of Human soldiers marched past, pushing the Parasite back towards the fence line.

"First line clear! Keep moving!" a Human shouted outside.

Kala grabbed her helmet off the ground and placed it on her head. Her shield warped to fit the new shape and she cycled the helmet's

internal power source. Her small radio caught a message." _This is Seraph lance commander 'Imurva. We are coming in to provide air support to any survivors." _A fellow Sangheili said. It appeared that the _Glorious Retribution _was now providing help to the Humans that had co-populated the planet with the crew for three years.

"_Copy that! Stay clear of the pylon. We've got troops near the Flood. Watch out for them." _The second voice from earlier shouted. She could hear a hint of joy in his voice.

A sonic boom echoed across the plains as seven Seraphs streaked towards the Parasite on the other side of the wall. Kala diverted her eyes as several plumes of fire erupted outside the fences and weapons meant to be used against ships were deployed.

The fighters circled around and dropped another volley on the Parasite. "_There are not many remaining. It seems you've done well against the parasite." _'Imurva radioed.

'Kastumai glanced over and saw Kala standing in cover behind a piece of medical machinery. "Velamn, are you alright?" he asked her.

"Yes, for the time being, Ultra." She coughed.

"Good. However, you will not be able to use a full-size rifle for many months. For now, you will have to use this." 'Kastumai tossed her a small Human sub-machine gun out of a case on the wall. "Be careful, we had to replace one of your hearts to save your life, and it is still young,"

"I understand, Ultra." Kala gripped the weapon and moved to guard the hole in the side of the medical structure with 'Kastumai.

As the line of Human troopers marched by, killing almost all the Parasite forms in the camp, Kala stepped out and searched around the sides of the medical structure. A Sangheili Parasite combat form, or just the armless form, staggered out from between a parked Warthog and the medical tent. All of a sudden, the creature broke apart and the Infection form leaped towards her. She fired a burst from her SMG and the Infection form exploded in a ball of gas and flesh.

Suddenly, there was a rumble from above. Out of the morning sky, the massive hull of a CPV-Class Heavy Destroyer descended above the camp. It roared overhead, charging the large plasma cannons on its nose. Kala looked across the horizon. Three more Destroyers with charging cannons flew in beside the first.

There was a flash of light and then a deafening roar. She could feel the heat of the plasma, even as far away from the point of impact as she was. The ground trembled slightly beneath her hooves.

"_By the Gods! All fighters break off attack runs now. Humans, we must make an emergency landing in your base." _'Imurva announced over the radio.

The Seraphs circled around, turning away from the glassing Destroyers and then making a hard landing in an empty field inside the camp perimeter.

The Destroyers circled the camp, glassing the plains as far as Kala could see. They effectively created an impassable wall of fire and glass around the camp, sealing the survivors off from the rest of the planet surface.

An SDV-class Corvette emerged from behind the Destroyers and came to a halt above the camp. Spirit dropships emerged from the ship's ventral hangars and flew down towards the surface. The Spirits circled once and landed near the central command Elephant. Kala jogged over to where the dropships were landing.

"_Patrols, stay in position. We don't want any Flood getting the jump on us." _A Human said over the radio. "_I need three additional fireteams to provide crowd control at the MCV."

>_

>Kala turned off the radio scanner when she arrived at a growing crowd of Human survivors and civilians. Sangheili SpecOps teams had deployed from the Spirits and set up a perimeter around the landing zone. A Phantom came down last, dropping off a gold armored Sangheili. Markings on the shoulder pads said that it was a Fleetmaster.

She could hear the Fleetmaster talking to a Human female who had emerged from the Elephant.

"I am Fleetmaster 'Sojom. We received your distress call and came as soon as we could to provide assistance." He said.

A Human officer came out of the Phantom behind the Fleetmaster. "Commander Canley. UEG Human-Sangheili fleet relations."

"Good to hear. I'm Lieutenant Farrow. Our commanding officer is currently based in Tumble's STC center." The Human that identified herself as Farrow said.

"I see." 'Sojom said. "Can we begin evacuation now, or do you need to wait for authorization from your superior?"

"No, I don't think we should wait at all, we've been here long enough. Come into the Elephant, we'll coordinate this inside." Farrow said, nodding back to the door.

'Sojom nodded and followed the Lieutenant inside. 'Kastumai walked up beside Kala.

"What's going on?" he asked.

"The fleet, it received the Human distress call. We're getting off this planet." She replied.

'Kastumai nodded. "Good. That means I will be able to continue my hunt for Hartford."

Kala limped back to the medical structure with 'Kastumai and collected the rest of her armor and personal effects.

"I am going to leave while I can." Kala said. "If anything happens I do not wish to be stranded here any longer."

"Very well. Good luck." 'Kastumai replied.

As Kala left the structure, the Fleetmaster's Assault Carrier came into view, dwarfing the Corvette. The Human refugees were already being loaded into the numerous Spirits and Phantoms that had come from the Corvette.

Kala stuffed her gear into a bag and headed towards the shortest line into a Phantom. As she walked through the smoldering base, she passed by the landed Seraphs and their crews. They were chatting with warriors that had come with the dropships. They glanced over at her as she passed.

"Female, what are you doing here?" A pilot said.

"Pilot, I volunteered to go with Major 'Cinotee when he was leaving. I thought it would be a good experience." She replied.

"I understand. Well, we are finally leaving this planet, thank the Gods." He said. "We may see one another in the future. Oh and be sure to contact your family, I am sure they wonder what happened to you."

"I will, Pilot." She replied. Kala had not thought of her aunt and uncle since she left. The pilot was right, they would be worried about her. Boarding the dropship, she decided to find them once the entire planet had finished evacuation, instead of heading back to the _Glorious Retribution._ As the Phantom filled to capacity, the exterior doors shut and the craft took off into the sky.

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**Yesterday
><strong>**September 19th 2555. 2052 hours
><strong>**Surface of Standard IV
><strong>**Teleporter Station
><strong>**SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [MIA]
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* * *

><p>Ryau sat on a rock and watched the last group of restored Humans and Sangheili exit the teleporter station. It had taken three days to sort through the data and piece it all back together properly. Thankfully all the memory data was linked to a consciousness and that to a body, and no one had complained about being the wrong species or gender.<p>

Naki and the Scientist were the last two through the teleporter. "_Natural night..._" The Scientist sighed in her native language. "_I have not seen_ _this for centuries._" Her equipment followed on a Forerunner hover pallet. The equipment was much like the MS/F Device Ryau wore, only it was designed to affect an area, not just the person who wore it.

"_The star will rise before we are done here, you will get to enjoy it as well." _Nek said from behind Ryau.

There was a familiar hum as a fleet of Phantoms arced over the mountains and came to a soft landing on the hillside. Ryau stood from his rock and approached the Phantom marked on his visor. The Phantom's side hatch opened and the Shipmaster of the _Glorious Retribution_ strolled out onto the singed soil.

"Major." The Shipmaster nodded. "Are these the last of the captured souls?"

"Yes Shipmaster, this is everyone we could find." Ryau said. "We have some children here as well."

"Their families will be glad for their return. I apologize for the time it took us to reach you here. All of our craft were severely damaged in the crash cycles ago." The Shipmaster said.

"It is better than nothing. I just hope they can sit still for four hours while heading there." Ryau chuckled.

"That's tru-" The Shipmaster stopped mid-sentence as he saw the Scientist and Nek standing, watching the sky. "By the Gods... are they really here?" He whispered.

Ryau nodded. "Yes. However they do not wish to be regarded as Gods, they are sentient beings, just like each of us."

The Shipmaster stood there and collected his thoughts. "Very well then. They shall get what they want." He nodded and turned away. Ryau could still sense some awe in the Shipmaster's voice, but that would be common throughout the day.

He and Nek loaded the Scientist's machinery into an empty Phantom. Ryau wasn't sure how to take the knowledge that there could be many different versions of Naki and him scattered across the universe, but the Scientist seemed pretty sure that he and Naki were the original two. He filed it away in his mind to think about when they made it off the planet. Naki and the others joined Ryau and Nek on the Phantom and it lifted off for the Glorious Retribution.

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>The flight across the planet's western ocean lasted a few hours. In order to pass the time, Ryau and Nek exchanged stories of past battles. While Nek was impressed with Ryau's combat experience, from what he said, Ryau understood that Nek had experienced more devastating battles between the Forerunner and the Flood, many of which rivaled the greatest of the battles in the Human-Covenant War. However, Ryau did not find that the least bit surprising, since the Flood was the biggest threat to the galaxy, even now.

The Phantoms banked and followed the coastline south. Their Phantom followed the others in formation as they glided into the top of the fallen Supercarrier. The cavernous hangar was loaded with a variety of ships in different stages of disassembly. Pools of water had formed in the buckled deck from three years of weather. A makeshift landing zone was set up over the ruined decks.

Structures were constructed from the remains of the wrecked Spirits and it seemed the Shipmaster had provided the first group of Areo Installation survivors with provisions and heat. The Phantoms and Spirits settled in the landing zone and began to offload their passengers.

Ryau stepped off the Phantom and pulled a stack of crates out of it, the hover pallet following him. "Where should we set your equipment up, Scientist?"

"Central area, near that transport." She said, pointing to a Phantom with half the crew bay missing.

Ryau nodded and pulled the pallet over to the spot the Scientist had chosen. The Shipmaster exited his Phantom and made an announcement. "New arrivals, please feel free to mingle. However, do not leave the hangar, paths down to ground level are unstable."

The Scientist set up her equipment in a large open space that was clear of the damaged ships. Hardlight emitters projected a series of structures large enough to fit at least fifty beings. A small control center took shape and the Scientist went to work.

She organized groups of survivors based on what former species they were and had them each enter a different hardlight structure. "The process should begin shortly, there may be some discomfort." The Scientist said, her message being translated into various other languages for those who did not understand English. She pressed holographic icons and a dull hum came from the buildings.

Subtle groans of discomfort rose from the doorways as the being inside were returned to their original species. The process went on for a few minutes. Ryau took Naki with him as he wandered towards an outside view port. The view port was cracked but it still held together.

"All that's left now is to get off this planet." Ryau said, looking out over the makeshift Covenant city. "I'm going to request another non-combat position. I have had enough of fighting for a while. Maybe it was not such a good idea to rejoin the military."

"Same here, I miss my short time at the college." Naki said. "There are so few of us that still know how to teach advanced subjects. I am a commodity."

Suddenly a slight rumble reverberated throughout the ship and a dark shape appeared in the clouds above. The view port's crack got worse and crossed its entire surface. "Anti-grav engines, our technology." Naki said. "That's a ship coming down."

Moments later, A CCS-class battle cruiser emerged from the cloud layer, then two more, and finally a fourth battle cruiser descended into view. They slowed to a halt around the outskirts of the city and began to charge their ventral plasma cannons. Instead of firing, however, the vessels continued to move further into the outskirts. The Shipmaster of the Glorious Retribution hurried by, heading for the ship's former bridge.

"Finally, it is good to hear from the outside. Or at most, someone that is not stranded on this planet." The Shipmaster said into his headpiece as he walked down the hall.

Ryau nodded to Naki and they walked back to the hangar bay. The structures the Scientist had set up were open once again and many people were wandering around, getting used to their old forms once again. Sergeant Green was with the rest of the extended group, sitting on crates and other objects.

"Ships showed up, either Loyalists or Sangheili, but they have not opened fire as of yet. So hopefully it's the latter." Ryau said,

leaning against a crate of his own.

"So we'll finally get off this planet?" Sergeant Green asked.

"Well I hope so. They better not be interested in keeping us in quarantine. Which is a possibility unfortunately." Ryau said.

"Yes, but we will just have to wait and see." Naki said. "I think that they would have fired already if they wished to quarantine us."

Ryau nodded in agreement and the conversation continued on. He broke off and headed for the Scientist's control center. "Ma'am, how is the conversion going?" He asked.

"_Almost complete." _She replied in Forerunner. "_What should we do after we're done here?"

>_

>"I'll see about getting a transport back to the teleporter station so you can reawaken the others." Ryau offered.

"_Thank you, that will make events run more smoothly." _The Scientist said.

The ship-wide communication system sounded a tone and the Shipmaster made an announcement. "_Attention. Our brothers have arrived to evacuate us from this planet at last. After completing their area scan they are confident that we are free from Parasite infection. Evacuation shuttle landing zones are as follows; Xnema Market District, Unggoy District Housing, Kig Yar Nesting Sites. Varina Lounge, and the old Human arena outside the Jiralhanae Feast Hall. Please secure all belongings and make your way to the listed sites. That is all." _There was a click and he came back on again. "_And for those that are in the hangar of this ship, we will provide transport for you to the evacuation ship. Loading will begin shortly."

>_

>Ryau looked over to the Scientist. "Well, I should get that request put in quickly. I'll be back." He spun around and headed back for the ramp he and Naki had seen the Shipmaster disappear down. Signs indicated the route to the bridge and he eventually came to the bridge doors. They had been forced open, likely after the crash when the power cores were damaged.

The Shipmaster stood over the Comm station and his guards flanked the platform's ramp. "Shipmaster, I must request a Phantom to return to Forerunners back to the teleportation station." Ryau said.

"Hold on a moment." The Shipmaster said into the receiver. He turned to Ryau and nodded. "Go ahead Major, if that is what they wish, then so be it. I will notify the pilot while you make your way back to the hangar, one of our faster ships will take them there. However you must move quickly, the fleet is discussing a quarantine of this planet."

"Thank you Shipmaster." Ryau said with a Sangheili salute. He walked back through the dilapidated ship and saw a newly repaired Phantom beside the Scientist's control center.

The pilot opened a direct communications channel to him. "_Major, the Shipmaster has placed my Phantom under your command. I will await

instruction here."

>_

>"Very good." Ryau looked down at his data-pad on his wrist and converted the old coordinates of the teleporter station from Human script to one the pilot could understand. "I'll be sending you coordinates to plot a course to. We will be leaving soon." Ryau said, and sent the converted coordinates.

"_Understood Major, standing by." _The pilot responded.

Ryau turned and approached the Scientist and Nek. "This Phantom will take you back to the teleporter station. You need to be quick though, the fleet is debating whether or not to quarantine the planet. It'll be difficult to help you if they do that."

"Hmpf, a quarantine is hardly what this planet needs. Its surface needs to be sterilized." Nek said, arms crossed. "By directed energy or high intensity plasma, like the one attached to this wrecked vessel."

"Well I'll be sure to pass that up to the Fleetmaster. I think Naki may be at a communications terminal campaigning for a partial quarantine so we'd still have access to the the Areo Installation." Ryau said. "But, we must hurry, we don't know how long it will be." Ryau led them to the Phantom and sent them off. He returned to the others, who were waiting beside another Phantom. Sergeant Green and the Spartans had already boarded, and Shan and Asau shared a crate while Ryka and Endesa discussed the current state of post-war Sanghelios. "Everyone on board now. We're getting off this planet."

The Sangheili boarded the with the others, and Naki approached from behind. "Ryau, the Fleetmaster has requested our presence on his bridge when we get up there."

Ryau nodded and boarded the Phantom with her. He gave the pilot the new coordinates and sat beside Naki in the passenger cabin. The Phantom lifted off and accelerated into orbit, heading towards a CAS-Class Assault Carrier that was docked with what remained of a Covenant Battle Cruiser that had formed a rough orbit around Standard's single moon.

The Phantom was directed to land, not in the Assault Carrier, but the core of the battle cruiser. The pilot activated the Phantom's intercom. "_Major Cinotee, the Fleet directed me to drop you two off here. The others were be taken to the Assault Carrier."

>_

>"Understood. Naki, let's go." Ryau said. He stood and rode the Phantom's grav-lift down with Naki following close behind. The Phantom backed out of the hangar and flew away.

The ship's hangar was filled with freeze-dried blood, and bullet holes and plasma burns scarred the walls, something that should not be on a ship that was destroyed only by MAC rounds and missiles. Human floodlights were in the corners of the hangar bay. Signs were bolted to the bulkheads with arrows pointing to locations, with English words pointing out the bridge or a common room.

"Well that doesn't make sense. I didn't think there was any boarding action while the fleet assaulted this planet." Naki said, examining

the bullet holes and signs.

"I think there might have been something else at play here." Ryau said. "Let's head to the bridge, that's probably where the Fleetmaster is." They quickly moved through the battle-scarred corridors of the cruiser until they came to a door guarded by two Honor Guards.

"Majors 'Cinotee and 'Cimutee, Fleetmaster 'Sojom is waiting inside." One of the Honor Guards said. He pressed a door control and it slid open.

"..'Sojom...?" Ryau whispered, the name seeming familiar.

"Ttpa." Naki nodded. "I had heard he was promot-" Naki stopped when she saw the state of the bridge.

Every command console had a human interface connected in some way. The ceiling was a mess of wires that were strung across the room, connecting to floodlights and computer inputs. The same symbol was stenciled on every piece of machinery, a black and white pyramid with a dot in the center. The ONI symbol. "This was the ship that had shot down the _Tahoma_ when it entered the system..." Ryau said quietly.

AN:

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><p>6 Months to the day have passed since the last chapter, AND I FINALLY GOT IT DONE.<p>

Big thanks to Rocet306 on dA for reviewing and helping get this moving in general!

I've already started the next chapter, which it should wrap things up.

If you don't really remember what the _Tahoma_ is, it was the UNSC ship that brought Ryau and Naki to Standard IV

23. Act V Pt 3 No Longer Alone

****The **Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act V Part 3*****_

No longer Alone

September 20th 2555. 1027 hours

>Wreck of unknown CCS-Class Battle Cruiser
Bridge

>SpecOps Major Ryau 'Cinotee [Active]
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* * *

><p>"Why would they shoot down their own ship?" Naki said, looking over the pile of Human corpses with uniforms adorned with ONI Prowler Corps patches. "Human ships look nothing like Covenant vessels and automatic targeting does not exist in Covenant computers."<p>

"I don't know, maybe it was to keep the Flood quarantined. I don't see any other reason to shoot on their own ship," Ryau said.

"But their communications are functioning perfectly." Naki hit the communications panel with her palm, the screen confirming her statement. "And the reason we came here ahead of schedule was a report that an ONI prowler was destroyed by plasma fire, what we're seeing here now could only come from an intact ship docking."

"Then ONI has some hidden agenda here. Honestly I'm not surprised, they were called Spooks for a reason and have a history of covering up Forerunner sites. Hell, I think they've tried to cover up how the war ended." Ryau stood up from examining the bodies. "They knew about the Forerunner facility... why did Hartford say that there was unknown tectonic activity?.."

"And most of the Marines that were assigned to this expedition are veterans of the Halo events. Cannon was a Reach survivor from Forerunner research locations, and Foss was the Shock trooper that you pulled out of the Longsword..." Naki's voice dropped. "You, you're the only Spartan captured by the Covenant, and haven't been completely quiet about it. I think... that we're part of a major cover up."

"Bastards at ONI would do something like that," Ryau grumbled. "Gods damn them, they've always seemed to cause problems."

The bridge doors across the room slid open and a Sangheili Fleetmaster walked in. A smaller female in dented blue armor walked beside him. "Naki, Ryau. It's good to see you again," Ttpa said, distracting them from the moment at hand.

"Likewise, it's been a while Ttpa," Naki said with a nod. "Thanks for coming here."

"It is my duty," he said. "What was it that you were talking about?"

"The Human organization ONI seems to have betrayed us and their own forces here," Naki said.

"Hmm. I have heard about this ONI, even the Humans do not trust them," Ttpa said. "Nevertheless, I had the Phantom bring you here on recommendations of Kala. She said you should see this before we vacate the system."

"Yes, while I was out fixing the communications relay we discovered a secret human base underneath. The Human, Hartford, tricked us and released the Parasite on the base of operations. No one knows where he is now," Kala said.

"Well, considering this, I believe we need to declare a class eight planetary quarantine," Naki said. "We need to keep the Forerunner installations out of ONI's control. It is very important."

"Let's talk on our way to my bridge." Ttpa called in his guards. The door on the other side of the bridge and the two Honor guards walked back in. They followed, keeping an eye on the corners and other doorways as if there could still be hostile forces still in the ship.

"Class eight? That would require a full fleet on station at all times. What is so valuable in that facility?"

"The Flood of course, and also...Forerunners. Ttpa, living, breathing Forerunners." Naki smiled as they all walked through the docking tube. "Imagine the technology they could help us unlock, what they could teach us."

"And we need to keep it out of ONI's hands, they tried to go down there before but they were killed by the automated systems," Ryau added.

"I believe we also need to keep the existence of the Forerunners a secret. ONI may just bypass a quarantine fleet and land anyway," Naki said.

"Hmm. I see where this is coming from," Ttpa said. "I will send a request to the High Council for an emergency fleet deployment. I will also relay information to the Human-Sangheili relation officer with the Humans United Earth Government."

One of the officers on the Bridge stood from his station. "Fleetmaster, two Human vessels have just entered the system at flank speed! A Frigate and a Destroyer. We are also picking up the signature of a stealth prowler entering planetary orbit."

Ttpa broke off from the conversation and moved to his command post on the bridge. "Hail them at once. This planet is now under a class eight quarantine. Pull all our ships off planet as soon as they finish evacuations. If the Humans refuse to respond repeat that we will open fire on any unauthorized vessels in proximity!" Ttpa glanced over at another console. "Disengage docking clamps, put us on an intercept course with the Prowler."

The Assault carrier rumbled as it moved at flank speed towards the ONI Prowler. Ryau and Naki moved and took positions in the back of the bridge, out of the way of the crew. "All other ships are to move to combat positions around the evacuation vessels."

All of a sudden a Human sprinted onto the bridge. "Fleetmaster. What is going on?"

"Commander Canley, this fleet arrived in system. We were informing them that this planet is under a class eight quarantine and preparing to take action," Ttpa responded.

"This is probably the UNSC's rescue group," Commander Canley said. "How many ships did they bring?"

"Three, a Prowler, a Frigate and a Destroyer. Not exactly a rescue group"

"Have they responded to your me-" Canley was cut off as a bridge officer shouted.

"Fleetmaster! The Frigate has opened fire on the Corvettes that are picking up the last of the dropships in orbit," they said. "One missile, sensors register as one of their Shiva nuclear missiles!"

"Have a Seraph intercept, and destroy the missile with a pulse laser! Those Corvettes are unshielded!" Ttpa ordered. "Get those Battle cruisers off the planet, we need their point defense lasers as soon as possible."

On screen, a squadron of Seraphs launched from the Corvettes and accelerated towards the light that was the missile. But suddenly, the Seraphs erupted in balls of flame and shrapnel. The missile shot past the debris and into the cluster of Corvettes rapidly accelerating away from each other. The missile detonated in a burst of white light. The ball of fire boiled away three Corvettes, the waves of radiation causing an aura of color across the planet's atmosphere.

As everyone was busy watching the nuclear destruction, the navigation officer shouted to Ttpa. "Fleetmaster, collision with the Prowler in fifteen seconds!"

"...Hmm... Charge all forward plasma cannons! Open fire on the Prowler if we fail to destroy it," Ttpa ordered. "Organize the rest of the fleet, engage the other Human ships."

A few moments passed and the Assault carrier slammed into the ONI Prowler, splitting it down its spine. The ship ruptured and started to vent atmosphere. "Prowler destroyed Fleetmaster."

"Shift course, open fire on the other ships!" the Fleetmaster said. "Have all combat ships open fire now!"

The command screens showed the ships arriving in formation. The Human vessels fired their MACs and let forth another barrage of missiles. Only this time, the point-defense lasers from the Battle cruisers were able to destroy them at a safe distance. The Frigate's MAC rounds slammed into the prow of the Assault carrier, draining already damaged shields. The Destroyer's MAC rounds punched through the shields of the smaller Cruiser and ground down its port side.

The Carrier's cameras were able to catch a decal painted onto the side of the two Human ships. The ONI emblem was located beside the vessels' designation where the identifying icon would be. "ONI... All ships fire at will!"

The fleet of Sangheili ships opened fire, and for a brief moment, the space between the two fleets was filled with the bright fire of plasma. For any outside observer, it looked like the Human-Covenant war had never ended. More nuclear missiles were launched from the ONI ships. The missiles arced over the incoming plasma volley and continued towards the Sangheili fleet. The ONI Frigate moved to shield the Destroyer and only seconds later the plasma slammed into the Frigate's starboard side.

Its matte black Titanium armor boiled away and more than half of the ship was vaporized. The slower plasma torpedoes altered course and struck the leading edge of the Destroyer's bridge, wiping it from existence. Secondary and tertiary plasma strikes made sure it would never be a threat again. However, with both ships destroyed, the missiles continued on their programmed courses, allowing the Sangheili fleet to break formation and escape the three flashes of nuclear fire.

"Status!" Ttpa barked at his bridge crew.

A few moments passed while damage reports filtered in from the various ships. "Three enemy vessels eliminated. Medium damage to all light vessels, but reports are still coming in. We lost four Corvettes, and two Battle cruisers. Fleetmaster, _Vitality of Condolence_ and _Peak of Oblivion_ have been heavily damaged and require dry dock for repairs."

"And what of the evacuation ships?" Ttpa asked.

"All evacuation ships have been accounted for. None lost, Excellency," the officer replied.

"Theyâ€¦ tried to fucking nuke usâ€¦" Commander Canley muttered. "Without even launching communications."

"The Office of Naval Intelligence, they didn't want to leave any witnesses. They shot down the _Tahoma_," Ryau said to the commander.

"The UEG will hear about this... this is unacceptable..." Canley said, visibly shaken up over what just happened.

"Good luck with that, Commander," Ryau said. "Ttpa, have they finished evacuating the planet?"

"That attack scrambled the ships, but the ground side is clear," Ttpa growled. "We need to get the evacuees out-system, we lost too many ships to that attack."

"Ttpa, can we talk private?" Naki asked, and nodded to Ryau to follow.

"Of course Naki, we'll go to my private command cabin." Ttpa nodded to Naki and Ryau and led them through a few corridors below the main bridge platform. The door sealed behind Ryau and the lights lining the door turned red. "What is it that you needed to talk about?"

"If the Humans are using nuclear weapons right away, I think it is important that we get the Forerunners off the planet as well." Naki sighed. "This is a big request, but could you manage to spare a Corvette to transport them to a classified location? It would need to be empty, no crew, only the Huragok. We have enough passengers to pilot the ship for one slipspace jump."

"That is a difficult request... I'll see what I can do. Many of the Corvettes were damaged in the explosion and the rest were loaded with survivors," Ttpa said. "And even if I did let you have a ship, I would need to know where you are thinking of taking them."

"Hmm... do you remember the Forerunner estate on Sanctum? You were here providing security for my class, and you carried me out when I was injured by the teleporter," Naki said, tracing a circle in her palm with her finger.

"That was quite a long time ago, Naki. The jungle has long reclaimed that dig site," Ttpa said. "Is that where you wish to take them?"

"Full circle," Naki said. "Yes I do, that was their home, thousands of years ago. So much has guided us to reach this point, I think it is our fate to do so. To deliver the final survivors of the Forerunner species to their home."

Ttpa nodded. "A noble purpose indeed. What makes you think that the ruins on Sanctum will be a safe place for them?"

"As you said, the dig site was reclaimed by the jungle, and its location was lost to everyone but the planet's locals, after the Covenant fell apart," Naki said. "And they aren't ruins, the structure was buried after a millennia of erosion, but otherwise it is quite intact."

"I see," Ttpa said and glanced over to Ryau. "You've been quiet, what do you have to say about this?"

"I don't know of the place Naki is talking about, but I trust her judgment on this. If she thinks it is a safe location for them to stay, then I say we do it," Ryau said. "Of course, we'd still need one of your ships."

"If I am going to do this, then I should return to the bridge to report the quarantine to the Council." Ttpa pulled out a data pad and typed across its screen. "You two should have access to most of this ship as crew for the time being. We're going to remain in orbit until a relief fleet can take over."

"How long could that be?" Ryau asked.

"My fleet was on patrol nearby, but a fleet from Sanghelios will take two weeks at least to get here, and before that there's the organization and assignments of warriors and crew. Taking that all into account, I expect relief to arrive in a month, maximum," Ttpa said. He keyed the door and it chimed open.

"Again, when you send the request and report, please do not mention the living Forerunners. ONI has ways of getting that information. A good substitute would be Monitors, since we did encounter those below as well," Naki said, pulling Ryau along.

"I will do my best. You can check the database to see where the rest of your lance was dropped off," Ttpa said.

Ryau and Naki left Ttpa's private room and headed to the bridge observation room. It was a small lounge for bridge officers and crew to take a break and still understand what was going on the bridge. Ryau took a seat in front of the one way window. "So I don't think we'll need to go into combat areas any time soon." Ryau said. He removed his helmet and popped off his chest piece.

"Well I hope not..." Naki replied and did the same. "Feels good to be out of our armor finally."

"Very much agreed." Ryau chuckled and leaned back in the chair.

A few hours passed and Ryau was awoken by a sudden commotion on the bridge. Three ships were on the Assault Carrier's main view screen, two Human Parabola-class Freighters and a Paris-class light frigate. Unlike the ONI ships before them, these ships were pockmarked with

dents and plasma scarring. The Frigate bore the UNSC insignia while the two Freighters had civilian classifications.

Ttpa had the Sangheili fleet had move behind Standard's moon to see the new arrivals intentions. The Human ships accelerated towards the planet, they passed through a small debris field and a camouflaged COM-probe that intercepted their ship-to-ship communications.

"_TAC is picking up heightened radiation levels. They're thinking nukes were used here within the last few hours,_" the Frigate reported.

"_Definitely, some of that stuff is still glowing out there,_" one of the Freighters added.

"_We're gonna hold back a bit. The SOS mentioned some kind of Parasite, didn't it? Maybe the Covies tried some bio-weapon out here,_" the second Freighter said. "_If it was bad enough to warn us about, maybe someone got here before us and had to quarantine it." _The Freighter slowed down and held back behind the others that continued on.

The two remaining ships continued on in silence, until the Frigate came back on. "_Cargo one and two, COM is picking up a signal from a Covenant based com-sat. We've got the translation program on it." _

"_Hold up on that, I'm getting a signal from the same location but it's in English." _The Freighter didn't say anything for a few moments. "_An Elite fleet has declared a system wide class eight quarantine. Whatever that means..." _

"_Sensors aren't picking up any of their ship signatures. If there's any of them here they're either behind the moon, or on the other side of the planet." _The probe passed out of range of the ships and the connection went dead.

Ttpa motioned to his bridge crew and they went to work "_Now, move us out of cover. Charge one pulse laser, should any missiles be launched, you have permission to fire." _The Assault Carrier glided out of the moon's shadow and into the view of the Human fleet. Ttpa had his Communications officer put him on an open channel from all the com-sats in the system. "_This is Fleetmaster 'Sojom. This system is under a Class eight quarantine. Entry into the planet's orbit is restricted. Absolutely no landing without authorization and multiple contamination checks. Armed escorts are also required. Acknowledge?" _Ttpa paused and let the line clear. A few seconds passed and there was still no response.

Finally the frigate responded. "_Understoodâ€|_ _er, _Fleetmaster. What of the people that called for help?" _

"_The Human survivors have been evacuated and been cleared of contamination,_" Ttpa responded.

"_Contamination of what, exactly?" _

"_The Flood, a parasitic life-form that had escaped a blockade during the final days of the war. Your government knows of its existence,_" Ttpa said. "_It crashed here and spread, but it has been contained,

and must stay that way." _There was another pause, Ryau assumed that the Human fleet was talking over what to do with this new information.

Commander Canley appeared on the bridge and offered to talk to the Fleet. "_FFG Seven-two-zero. This is Commander Canley with the UEG Human-Sangheili Fleet relations. I can confirm what Fleetmaster 'Sojom has said. All known survivors have been evacuated and declared free of infection. The Sangheili are also willing to share what technology they use to clear them." _He looked up at Ttpa and Ttpa nodded.

"_Copy that sir. We've got two empty freighters here for survivor pickup. Think we can transfer them over?"_

Canley again looked up for authorization, and Ttpa nodded again. "_We can do that. The Sangheili will coordinate with your NAV-Officers."_

"_Received, loud and clear. Switching comms now. We will be docking shortly." _The Frigate clicked off the channel. Ttpa gave commands to his officers who relayed them to the many ships in the fleet.

Ryau looked up from the bridge and glanced over at Naki. "It seems we may have our Corvette after all," he said.

"Indeed it does. I'll ask Ttpa when the transfers are complete," Naki said. "We should at least let our lance know what our plan is." Naki pulled her armor back on.

Ryau did the same and followed Naki out of the observation room. They headed through the corridors and took the personnel lift to the Assault Carrier's topside hangar. Ryau's lance and Naki's father were sitting, once again, on a pile of crates eating some fresh food.

Ryau sat on an open crate and got their attention. "Naki and I are hopefully going to be heading off on our own ship for a bit," he said. "And, some final orders, if any Humans ask about the Forerunners, just tell them there were just monitors there. The existence of living Forerunners should be kept a secret until they're somewhere safe."

They all nodded. "Makes sense," Shan said. "Is there anything else we should not tell the Humans? Perhaps the composer systems down there?"

"Yes, leave that out of the story if they ask. We wont have to worry about the other survivors, from what I've heard they don't understand much of what happened down there," he said. Ryau looked over to Naki who had gotten herself a meal. Ryau shrugged and got and got a plate from a food cart that had been left nearby.

It had been a few hours since the UNSC arrived to pick up the Human survivors of Standard IV. Ryau sat on the floor of the hangar, Naki sat beside him, leaning on his shoulder. The subtle tension that had filled the fleet since the nuclear attack had eased off, but there was still sadness from the crew, many had known those that were on the ships that were destroyed. Endesa, Asau and Shan were asleep on the other side of the crate circle. Naki's father was standing off in

the corner looking at the activity on the other side of the Assault Carrier's massive hangar.

The ship's PA system pinged and echoed across the entire hangar. "_Special Operations Major Ryau Cinotee and Science Major Naki Cimutee, report to the bridge immediately."_"

Naki pulled off his shoulder and stood up. "Well, we better get there. If it's not about the ship, I'll be sure to ask."

Ryau got up and followed her back to the personnel lift. They flew down the grav-conveyer and down a network of grav-lifts. They were ejected from the lift network outside the bridge. The bridge guards checked their identities and let them proceed.

Ttpa was standing on the elevated platform overlooking his crew at the controls. The main view screen was currently focused on the Civilian Fighters in a makeshift soft-dock with multiple Corvettes and Cruisers that had been used to pick up the survivors. One of the other screens was viewing a slightly damaged Corvette, maintenance ships were around it doing repairs. Ttpa turned and motioned for Ryau and Naki to follow him down to the private room.

The door closed and locked, Ttpa brought the damaged Corvette up on a holographic interface. "The Shipmaster was not happy that I ordered him to surrender his ship, but he complied. That ship is now under your command. Ryau, temporarily you have been promoted to Shipmaster and released from my command. Once you return to Sanghelios the Corvette will be regarded as a civilian craft and your promotion will be void. I will mark the Corvette as too damaged for military service for logistical reasons."

"Understood, thank you Ttpa." Ryau nodded. "When will repairs be complete?"

"They began just after the Humans arrived, they are expected to be done within the next few units. That is why I chose to contact you now," Ttpa said. "A shuttle will take you over. The crew has already been evacuated."

"Again, thank you Ttpa. We should get moving as soon as we can," Naki said. "Where do we catch the shuttle?"

"It is in starboard hangar seven. I expect a status message when you two finish what you are doing so that I know that you were not stopped," Ttpa said. "Good luck. Ryau, you need to get your shipmaster decals painted. The armory on that level will be expecting you."

"Alright, I guess we'll be going," Ryau said.

Ttpa unlocked the door and escorted them out off the bridge. When they finally ended up on the Corvette, a hour had passed and the silver parts of Ryau's were now a metallic gold. They watched the shuttle accelerate out of the Corvette's main hangar and head back towards the Carrier.

Ryau glanced around the hangar bay, three Seraphs were suspended from a ceiling rail and seven specialized Banshees were stored in compartments. "Which way to the bridge?" Ryau asked.

"This way." Naki started walking towards a doorway. "And don't let that gold go to your head, it's not going to last forever." She giggled and flicked the newly painted points on his armor.

"I will not. It is strictly a formality." Ryau stood straight and waved his hand regally. He broke the act and chuckled, following Naki down a ramp which eventually dumped them on the bridge. "So... how are we going to fly this with just the two of us?"

"Your neural lace, we can use it to assist us in control. When we get the Forerunners aboard we may be able to integrate one of their associated intelligences so we'll be able to control the ship as the two of us without the assistance of your neural lace." Naki connected her data pad to the Corvettes computers. "Let's begin now, stand by the command console and let me connect your lace to the systems." Ryau moved over to the main console and Naki tinkered with her data pad.

Ryau felt something cool fill the base of his skull and some sort of indicator appeared in his vision. "I think you got it," he said.

"That I have. It seems the Scientist really worked hard on this, it has an interface for piloting vessels with the mind. It seems we won't need to work on any complicated subroutines." Naki set the data pad back into her thigh pack. "Try it out. You are going to want to set a marker to decide which side is up, and whether we're oriented to that point. From then I guess it is just up, down, left, right and the angles for directions. We can just leave the normal computer to calculate the angle of reentry."

"Hmm alright." Ryau nodded and leaned against the command console to steady himself. He concentrated on indicating a reference plane for directions and a bright silver band appeared on the main view screen. Tick marks lined the sight for the pitch of the Corvette, but they were a aqua color to differentiate them from the reference plane. Ryau sighed and thought about bringing the Corvette around to face the planet. He didn't know the exact heading, but he hoped mental generalizations would be enough to put them on course.

The Corvette slowly spun about and faced the planet below. "Ha! Great," Naki exclaimed. "Start us towards the planet and I'll have Ttpa provide us an escort as per the Quarantine restrictions." Naki headed off and called in the request at the communications station.

A few moments later, a squadron of Seraphs matched their speed and followed them into the atmosphere. Ryau let the computer guide him in so they would not burn up or skip off the atmosphere. Flying the Corvette in the planet's gravity was somewhat easier, with a defined up and down, and no need to orient them with some random point. Ryau took them to the coordinates of the teleporter station and nestled the ship into the mountain valley and set it to hold position.

"I'm going to try and disengage myself from the link," Ryau said. Naki nodded, and Ryau concentrated on removing his control from the ship. He felt the cool feeling dissipate and stepped away from the command console. "Done. Let's get our passengers, shall we?"

"Yes, lets," Naki replied.

Ryau and Naki hurried through the many corridors of the Corvette and boarded a Phantom in the ventral launch bay. "At least I can fly this without the neural lace." Ryau said, taking the Phantom out just a few hundred meters to the landing zone they had set up outside the teleporter station.

They hopped out and Naki activated the station's intercom. "Scientist, we're at the teleportation pad. Will you bring us in?" Naki asked.

There was a silence for a few moments. "_Very well, please wait a moment,_" she replied. The teleporter hummed to life and within a blink, Ryau and Naki were standing among four new Forerunner faces. The Scientist was standing at the teleporters controls. "_You are back, what did you decide to do?_" she asked in Forerunner.

"_We have a ship, and are cleared to take you to your estate in secret,_" Naki replied in kind. "_No one besides the Fleetmaster and our lance knows what we are doing._"

"_Good, good. Is the ship on the surface?_" the Scientist asked.

"_Yes. So let_'s remove any important technology and take it with us, in case ONI_ _manages to pass_ _the blockade,_" Ryau said.

"_ONI?" _the Scientist asked. "_Perhaps you should update our new arrivals on the situation."_

"_The Human Office of Naval Intelligence. They showed up just after the Sangheili did, but they launched weapons of mass destruction immediately._ _They were also responsible for shooting down the ship we arrived on. They are something that should be avoided at all costs,_" Ryau answered. "_As for transportation, we have an empty ship with plenty of cargo space. We'll take what we can."_

"_I understand..." _the Scientist said. "_This Lab houses almost all the sensitive materials. We should also remove the important parts of the Sentinel and Promethean armor production facilities."_

"_An easy way would also be to remove the Human code from all the genetic locks." _Marissa added from beside Nek.

"_Good thinking. We will get right on that,_" one of the new Forerunners said. "_If what this one says is true, then the Humans are not yet fit to obtain the Mantle and what comes with it."_ There was a general murmur of agreement and everyone went to work.

Naki approached the Scientist. "Misheelle... I was wondering if Ryau and I could have an AI for controlling the ship."

"Of course, we have plenty of dormant ancillas, and we are the same person. What is mine, is yours." The Scientist had a small laugh. "Well, almost everything."

Naki smiled. "It is still hard to accept that. However given the events that happened it does not seem that far-fetched."

Hours passed, and slowly, the Corvette was filled with crates and crates full of untold technologies. Nek was not pleased that the Corvette did not have shields, so he had Misheelle install a shield generator on the hull. Ryau stood on the bridge and keyed the ship's intercom system. "Is everyone aboard? Is all cargo stowed?"

Nek responded over the intercom. "_We have loaded all of the cargo, and everyone has been moved to the open cabins."_

"Understood. Launching in 5..." Ryau took control and at the end of his countdown, took the corvette out of the atmosphere. Naki dismissed the fighter escort and went back to work integrating the AI into the ship's systems. Ryau opened the private channel used for communication between Shipmasters and the Fleetmaster. "Ttpa, precious cargo is aboard. We'll see you on the other side."

"_Good, gods be with you." _Ttpa trailed off for a moment. "_Literally and figuratively, Cinotee."_"

"Will do, Fleetmaster." Ryau chuckled and closed the channel. He put the Corvette on course to leave Standard's orbit and had the computer calculate the slipspace route to the Sangheili colony of Sanctum.

* * *

><p>AN
**One chapter remains.

Honestly, if you have any questions, pop them in a review and I'll answer them in the AN on the next chapter

24. Act V Pt 4 Home

__**The **Life of Ryau 'Cinotee: Return to Standard Act V Part 4|
The End*****__**

Home

**October 3rd 2555 0210 hours

>**SDV-Class Corvette **_**Gracious Honor
>_**27 meters above the surface of Sanctum

>**[Temp] Shipmaster Ryau 'Cinotee [Active]**

* * *

><p>Ryau locked the ship's altitude and disconnected his neural lace from the systems. The ship's new AI, known as Drifts of True Sands, came over the ship's intercom. "All passengers, we have arrived at our destination. Please exit at the ventral hangar via the gravity lift."

Ryau stretched and stood from the command chair. "Now that we're here, what are we going to do with this ship Ttpa just apparently gave us?" he asked Naki.

"I think we'll store it at either at the spaceport or at the old shipping port. The port is mostly abandoned since Varo began exporting via space, so we could use one of the old hangars there

with permission," Naki said, following Ryau out of the bridge and into the halls.

"Good, that old port was pretty large wasn't it?" Ryau said. They took the grav-lift through the jungle trees and down to Sanctum's surface beside the Forerunners.

"Yes, it was." Naki waved over to the Forerunners. They had gotten translation software upgraded in their armor so they could understand and respond in Sangheilan and English. "If you would follow me, I'll lead you to the entrance. It may not be that nice at the moment, but it's not well known and still functioning."

Naki led the Forerunners down a path. The jungle trees and plants had grown around old Covenant tents that had been left behind after the excavation was completed many years ago. The Forerunner door on the front had been replaced by one of Covenant build, and Naki keyed it open. Nek and Misheelle went in first. Misheelle ran her palm around the entryway's wall, and at first nothing happened then after a few seconds, a holographic interface flickered to life. She typed some commands and suddenly lights came online all though the area.

"After a millennia, this place still functions." Misheelle said. "It does need a bit of maintenance though, doesn't it." She glanced around at all the cave flora growing inside.

"Yes, it does indeed." Nek responded. "Is there anything inside that could cause danger?"

"This is the only way inside for anything large, there were holes in the skylights that allowed the seeds and rodents to get inside, but they were no bigger than my arm." Naki replied.

"Very well." Nek said, he backed into a recess in the wall and disengaged his armor. He stepped out and into the air, remaining in his personal armor. "Can you bring the furniture online? I can see our traditional furnishings have ceased to be."

Misheelle nodded and changed some settings on the panel. Hardlight chairs and tables appeared out of nowhere, wall symbols and shields of multiple colors glowed brightly.

To all the Forerunners, it appeared as a something they had all seen in their own homes, but Naki had never seen a Forerunner estate fully decorated. "Gods... it looks amazing. I've never seen this place like this." She muttered.

"Well, welcome to our real home." The Scientist said. "I will activate the maintenance sentinels, they should have the living quarters cleaned in under an hour. The plants will be transplanted to a garden room instead of being discarded."

The small drones went to work, cleaning the dirt and plants off the walls and floors. Ryau and Naki walked out of the building, along the path on the jungle. Naki pulled him along to the edge of the large water reservoir she had visited when she was younger. "This is where I came after I woke up in this body. It was my first expedition as a Sangheili," Naki said quietly. "It seems fitting to bring you here, to where it started."

Ryau nodded. "Indeed it does," He looked around at the pool of water. "Care for a swim?"

"Sure. It has sure been a while since we swam without our armor," Naki stripped down and slipped into the pool.

Ryau slid in and relaxed in the cool water beside her. "I love you, Naki. You know that right?"

"Of course Ryau," Naki giggled.

Ryau swam to shore and retrieved something from his pile of clothes. "Well why don't we make it official?" In the shallow end of the reservoir, Ryau knelt down. "I haven't really had the time to look up the Sangheili customs, but I'm sure you remember this one."

"Ha! Its about time," Naki smiled and hugged him.

Ryau opened the small box and placed a ring on her finger. The ring was made of Forerunner alloy and the stone was a piece of crystal Naki had seen while they had explored the Areo installations. "I had the Scientist create it while you were working on the AI."

"Ryau, it's beautiful," Naki said and examined the ring. She noted that the symbol Misheelle had used was engraved in the stone, so it appeared magnified if anyone looked close enough.

Ryau saw where she was looking. "We thought it was appropriate. It is the symbol of our Forerunner family, so it reflects our future as well."

"Yes, yes, that makes sense. But you have not even met my mother yet," Naki said. "We should do that as soon as we get back."

"Alright, we'll do that," Ryau said. They locked mandibles and slowly drifted out to the deeper end of the reservoir.

After a relaxing swim and nap in the sunlight to dry off, they hiked back to the estate to see how the Forerunners were readjusting to their old home. When Ryau and Naki approached, they saw that some trees around the exterior had been cut down.

"Seems like they've been busy," Ryau remarked.

"Indeed it does," Naki glanced around at all the tree stumps. Some of the dirt that covered the structure had been cleared away where windows had been, metal supports kept the soil from falling back in front of the view.

When they walked inside, they saw that the interiors were brightly lit and the walls were clean and full of color. The blue-gray of Forerunner metal had been covered by wood designs lit up by spotlights. In the middle of the front room, maintenance Sentinels were still busy cutting away logs to create more decorations. Ryau and Naki followed the sounds of conversation into a newly furnished dining room. The table was a combination of freshly polished wood and Hardlight engraving. Local fruits and leaves adorned the table and the Forerunners sat eating.

"_After hundreds of thousands of years, the estate_'s garden overgrew the area and became_ _many of the fruit trees in this jungle,"_ the Scientist explained to the others. "_We won_'t have to restart the greenhouse."_

Ryau knocked on the wall, alerting them to their arrival. "So, is everything going along fine?"

"_Yes, quite well. The Sentinels are hard at work refurnishing all the living spaces, and the isolation from the nearest population settlements is good enough_ _that we can remain hidden," _Nek said. "_We had the Sentinels clear an area of obstructions around the estate so we would be able to see if anyone did approach."_

"So that's why half the trees were cut down," Ryau chuckled. "_We're just checking in before we head back to our home. We have the communications device that you,_ _Scientist, left aboard the ship. We'll call if we need to."_

"_As will we," _Nek responded. "_Thank you for helping our daughter end the conflict with Jeaso and getting us away from the Humans undetected."_

"_You are all welcome," _Ryau said with a nod. "_We'll be leaving as soon as we're through here."_

"_Oh no, stay for a while. Now that we're not in danger of anything, you can experience true Forerunner hospitality," _Misheelle said.

"_Hmm tempting offer,"_ Ryau said.

"Lets take it, we are not due home any specified time," Naki smiled. "Besides we should get to know our Forerunner counterparts even better. Spending a week or so here should do it."

Two weeks later, Ryau and Naki boarded the Corvette and waved goodbye to the Forerunners from the ventral hangar. The AI took control and guided the ship into orbit. They were authorized for the jump and they arrived back in Sanghelios space a few days later. Ryau put them on course for Zelso's spaceport. Sanghelios Space Traffic Control was quiet about their arrival, just a single hail and coordinates for their approach. The Corvette arced over the Sea of Kar'un and approached the blinking lights of the spaceport nestled between the bright lights of Varo and the dimmer lights of Cleavete.

"_SDV-Corvette approaching Zelso Transport Hub. State passenger status and visit period." _The local STC hailed them.

"This is Corvette three-two-seven. Total passenger and crew is two, citizens of Zelso. Ryau 'Cinotee and Naki 'Cimutee reporting back from deployment. Fleetmaster 'Sojom released us from duty," Ryau said.

"_Stand-by," _was the only response. Presumably they were checking the information they had on file. "_Fleetmaster 'Sojom has reported in. You are authorized to land in zone AR-one-one-seven. Allowed moorage, two weeks. Welcome back to Zelso, Majors."_

They flew over the coast and came over the spaceport. The massive area could host a dozen Corvettes or a few CCS-Class Battle cruisers. Ryau could see at least thirty running lights just over the Kama mountains, where Zelso dry docked their defense fleet. The Corvette descended and settled with its lower ring only three meters from the ground. The landing site activated anti-grav plates that would keep the ship from crashing into the ground when the ship is powered down.

The Corvette settled on the field and clamps held it in position. They moved to the central hangar. "Well, do we drive home, or take one of our new Phantoms?" Ryau chuckled.

"Hmm, we took our truck here, but the trip home would be so much faster by Phantom." Naki laughed with Ryau.

Ryau walked over to a control console and called down the lone Phantom. They boarded the ship and set to leave. "Zelso transport hub, this is Phantom two-seven-one. Launching from the Corvette on pad AR-one-one-seven. We'll be flying home."

"_Understood Major, lanes are clear," _they responded.

Ryau took the Phantom out of the hangar and flew towards home. The Phantom soared over the bright skyscrapers of Varo that rose among the artificial forest that surrounded them. Naki glanced at all the screens and leaned against him. "Let us not go home just yet, turn west. We should go to my mothers house."

"Alright then, guide me there." Ryau banked the Phantom left, towards the mountain range.

"Just follow the highway, it goes right to Muka Village. That's where she lives," Naki said. The Phantom rose over the snow capped mountains, following the silver-blue band of lights that was the highway far below. They came across a small town set up in the valley in the mountain range. "There, land in that field. That's an old landing pad."

"Got it, setting down there," Ryau said.

As soon as they landed, Naki led Ryau towards a house nestled in the trees, a tall mountain rose against the moonlight behind it. "This is my mother's house, I grew up here." The house was made of stone, irregular blocks made up the base, the ornately carved upper stones were difficult to see in the dark. Naki walked up to the door and knocked.

An older female Sangheili answered the door. "Naki! Welcome home." She said, giving Naki a hug. She only came to Naki shoulders and spoke with an accent that was not from this far north. "Your sister arrived just a few hours ago. Ryka was beginning to wonder what took you so long to come home."

"Father is already here?" Naki asked.

"Of course, he said that that he was sent home right after you," her mother said. "Bah, come in, come in."

She moved out of the doorway and Naki and Ryau filed inside. Ryau

looked down and kicked the snow off his boots. When he looked back up, he noticed that Naki and her mother had a different leg structure. Naki's was like Ryau, straighter and a smaller mid-leg, her mother had much longer mid-legs and large toes instead of the short and stubby ones he and Naki shared.

They walked into the entryway and took off their coats. Naki's mother blocked the way into the living room. "Naki Cimutee, what happened to you? You look as young as your sister."

"Mother, you know I work with Forerunner technology. Some of their properties areâ€¦ strange," Naki replied.

"Hmm, I guess that is right," she nodded and looked over to Ryau. "And who is this, hmm?"

"This is Ryau 'Cinotee, he is my soon-to-be husband," Naki smiled. "He declared his intent on our way home."

"That is glorious news," she bowed to Ryau. "I am Naki's mother, Na`an Cimuia."

"Pleasure to meet you, Na`an," Ryau nodded his head.

"Come, come, let us tell the others." Na`an led them through the entryway and into the living room. Ryka sat in a chair and chatted with another female, presumably Naki's sister.

Ryka looked over when he saw them enter. "Naki, Ryau, about time you two showed up."

"We stopped off somewhere and had some well deserved vacation." Ryau chuckled.

"Indeed we did," Naki smiled. "Father, Ser`a, Ryau and I are getting married next month. I think we decided to host it at our home. When we get a time, we'll let you know."

Ser`a stood up and hugged Naki. "Finally, older sister. I was afraid that I was going to find a male before you did."

"Oh you know I had plenty of males interested in me." Naki giggled.

Ryau got a nod from Ryka as he sat down in an open chair. Naki and her family continued to talk about all that happened since they had last met. Naki had maintained contact with her family, but she had left out any mention of her loss of age, or Ryau until they could meet face to face.

* * *

><p>The local Sangheili military council sat around a desk reviewing the reports and documents that Ryau and Naki had given to them. Ryau and Naki had been there for the last two hours, Yet only just now the councilors found out the visual footage from Ryau's helmet had been 'rendered irretrievable' by hardlight radiation anywhere the Forerunners were either seen or talked to.<p>

"Based on your reports, you were drawn into a conflict between

damaged Associated Intelligences of Forerunner origin. Is that correct?" one of the council members asked.

"Yes, we were transported into the installation accidentally. That is where we met the Monitor, Marissa," Naki said.

"And what reason did you have to trust this Monitor?" another council member asked.

"We had no reason not to trust her... it. There was no evidence that there were any hostile Monitors," Ryau responded.

"Very well... now on to this Corvette... _Gracious Honor. _From your explanation earlier in this debriefing, you said that Fleetmaster 'Sojom gave you the ship. For what reason?"

"Transport of Forerunner technology. It was kept secret as at that moment we did not know how much ONI knew about our fleet operations, or if any of their ships were still in the area," Ryau nodded.

"But why would he not loan the ship, why did he put the ship in your name?"

"I don't know, maybe it was so that he could reduce the workload of the Huragok. Half the ship is a patchwork of emergency plates and sealed off sections. There were other, more important ships in the fleet that were damaged."

"True, very true. However, you are in luck. That ship was recently scheduled for decommissioning and conversion into a cargo vessel. Since the engagement left a few other critically damaged Corvettes, we've decided to use them instead. After reviewing your service records, we see that you did not receive any promotion for your actions in the ending half of the war."

Another Sangheili, his armor trimmed in green, flipped a few of the holographic screens away and added his commentary. "Science Major 'Cimutee, you were in charge of the _Mercy and Betrayal_ when it was reassigned to a combat role with science as secondary. In this role, it was destroyed during the first battle of Earth, causing the loss of countless cycles of research and irreplaceable equipment."

The Officer sitting at the end of the table added to the point the others were making. "We will be allowing you to keep the ship. However, a maintenance crew will be removing the heavy armaments very soon. Is that understood?"

Ryau nodded. "Yes, sir. I would also like to request to be transferred to reserve duty and return to my position teaching at the academy."

The council looked around at one another and nodded. "We will make sure of it. You will also be promoted to Special Operations Officer on track to Special Operations Sub-Commander to make up for your previous actions." He nodded over to Naki. "We would be grateful if you were to retake your position at the University. There are not many scientists left to teach the next generation. Although it will not be a military position, you will keep your rank."

"Does this fit with your requests, Majors?" the Science council

member asked.

"Yes it does councilors. Thank you," Naki said.

"That will be all majors, you are free to go. If we have any more questions we will call you back to this location." The councilors stood and headed out of the room.

Ryau and Naki walked down the steps of Zelso's capitol building in Veral, north of Varo. "That debriefing was veryâ€¦ in-depth," Ryau said.

"Perhaps they noticed the... selective wording in our reports," Naki said.

"Right, at least they're letting us keep the ship. But it's unfortunate that they are removing the main cannons. Although we can get new ones in the future, if we want to."

"That's true, and it's a good thing that we're able to store it at the old port. For free no less." Naki hopped down the steps and over to their vehicle.

"Yeah, good thinking on that." Ryau said. "Let's go home and plan that wedding of ours."

Ryau and Naki went home and did just that. The Sangheili blockade led by Ttpa remained in a quarantine pattern until the council was able to assemble a relief fleet. Endesa, Shan and Asau volunteered to spend the rest of their duty rotation with the relief fleet, guarding the rare research team that ventured to the surface. Eventually humanity was allowed access to the surface, but nowhere near the access points to the Forerunner installation.

No one except for the Forerunners had access to the installation. Before the Scientist left, she masked its signal and shut down virtually all exterior systems. Among the cargo she loaded onto Ryau and Naki's Corvette sat every different version of the MS/F Device she had ever made. She had also included much of the machinery that went into the the creation of that kind of technology. A copy of all the Scientist's research sat in the cargo hold of the Corvette that, in turn, sat in an abandoned hangar in Zelso's old port. There it would be safe from ONI, and the others that would wish to use it for their own gain, or so they thought.

****Later****

* * *

><p>Ryau stood beside Naki on a lowered platform. He in his polished black armor and she in her forest green. Naki's family sat on one side of the chamber. They had been interested in meeting Ryau's Human family, but were disappointed to learn that, like all Spartans, he didn't have one anymore. Where Ryau's family would have sat, were his and Naki's friends. D`rok, Kan, Rtik, and many of the people they had met during their journeys. Also Ttpa had managed to bring Ryau's lance home in time for the ceremony.<p>

Naki and Ryau had spent the last few minutes retelling the story of how Ryau had been captured and used for Project Leau. Although,

everyone there had heard it in one way or another before, this was tradition. Ryau and Naki broke the news to Naki's mother and sister a few days before so they wouldn't be taken aback.

They had opted for one of the more traditional Sangheili weddings that were making a come back. The old Forerunner based religions stated that the Great Journey was about the path through life, not something that must be initiated, and that was a major aspect back then.

Once the two finished talking, the Sangheili priest stepped out of the nook in the platform. "These two have chosen to unite two families in a sacred bond, walk the sacred path together and go as one into the great journey. Naki Cimutee and Ryau Cinotee, one, together for eternity. We are gathered here to celebrate their commitment to each other. Cinotee, do you take Cimutee to be your wife?"

"Yes." Ryau nodded.

"Cimutee, do you take Cinotee to be your husband?"

"Indeed I do" Naki nodded as well.

The priest nodded to two assistants who were standing behind Ryau and Naki. They stepped out and placed gold and white sashes over the couple, signifying that they were married. Ryau and Naki locked mandibles in a Sangheilan kiss and exited the platform. Behind them, the spotlights dimmed and the guests left the chamber.

As Ryau and Naki went to join their guests in the dining hall, they found that they were at a time of peace. However that will only last so long, for the galaxy will always be in conflict, in one place or another. The conflict will find its way to them again.

* * *

><p>AN: Stick around for the next chapter in the LoRC series! Sanghelios Frontlines!

Drop me a comment, tell me what you thought of the story!

There it is, the end of Return To Standard! Can't believe it really, three years of writing this

Thanks to everyone that's read and reviewed and faved along the way!

End
file.